

Professional Doctorate Portfolio

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A report submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements of the University of Sunderland
for the degree of Professional Doctorate

This research programme was carried out in collaboration with
University Centre Quayside (UCQ)

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Introduction to the portfolio

The professional doctorate requires a report and portfolio that evidence the achievement of the following learning outcomes:

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

“O Would some power the giftie gie us

To see ourselves as others see us!

It would frae many a blunder free us”

- Robbie Burns

My portfolio has four constituents, which together relate to my setting up of UCQ and delivery of degree apprenticeships:

Section One (1989 – 2013)

The first section reflects and evidences what happened before I decided to set up UCQ and to deliver the degree apprenticeship. This starts with my undergraduate degree, through establishing the Nimis business, reflection on the quinquennial cycles of change and my own personal growth during that quarter of a century.

Section Two (2014-2015)

In the second section I reflect on the motivators and agents of change that led to me setting up UCQ and the creation of a degree apprenticeship programme. This includes my business review and analysis, sectoral analysis and personal motivation to enter higher education (as a disruptor) and to deliver on degree apprenticeships. It also details participation on the Trailblazer groups and parliamentary attendance and input, together with details of my qualifications and fellowships.

Section Three (2016)

In section three I detail what was involved in the setting up of UCQ. This includes the various Gap Analyses showing what we would need in order to apply for Degree Validation and Institutional Approval. Evidence includes the new organisation structure, policies and procedure documents, the BA (Hons) Professional Management degree programme I wrote with my colleagues with input from employer and learner focus groups, the CMI, ESFA, QAA and The Open University. Included are links to the brochures, Student Handbook, website,

Strategic Plan and other engagement and promotional materials I created with two of my colleagues.

Section Four (2017-2019)

The final portfolio section details my experience of running the degree apprenticeship programme, together with consideration of the main tensions. This evidence includes the creation, monitoring and review of the UCQ sales & marketing strategy, the corporate strategy, staff and student focus groups, engagement with regional sector and employer groups, sharing of research through the OUVP (Open University Vocational Partners) conference. Included are details of the UCQ review process.

My overall submission consists of a research report and my portfolio, which are interlinked and should be viewed alongside each other.

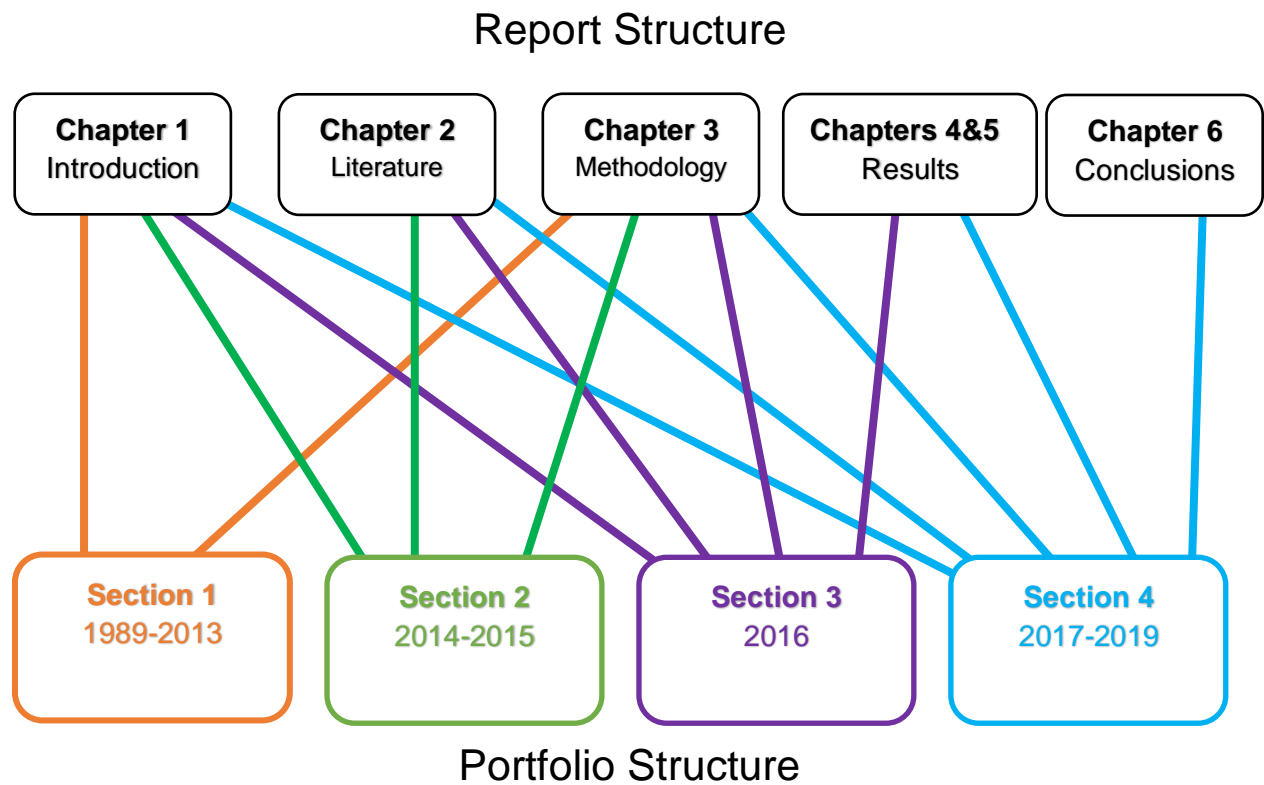


Figure 0.1 – Diagram showing the structural linkages between the Report and the Portfolio

The following table provides a representational mapping of the portfolio elements against the Learning Outcomes of the Professional Doctorate:

Portfolio evidence	Learning outcomes						
	K1	K2	K3	K4	S1	S2	S3
Section One							
Undergrad: Computing at Newcastle Poly							
Sandwich year at Byline Software (1990-1991)							
DUBS: Graduate Enterprise Programme (GEP)							
Establishing Nimis Information Services							
Nimis Limited							
Pathfinder & Prime Ministerial Launch							
Management Consultancy and Innovation							
Accredited Training and Acquisitions							
Falling off a cliff							
Section Two							
Business and sector reviews							
Qualifications and fellowships							
Trailblazing							
Parliamentary debating							

Table 0.1: Representational mapping of portfolio elements against the doctoral Learning Outcomes (Sections One and Two)

Portfolio evidence	Learning outcomes						
	K1	K2	K3	K4	S1	S2	S3
Section Three							
Trying to establish an HE partnership							
Gap analysis							
New organisation structure(s)							
Policies and procedures							
BA (Hons) Professional Management – programme creation							
HE strategic plan							
Website and brochures							
Section Four							
Set up of UCQ Commercial Operations							
Strategic plan (2018-2023)							
Core Values							
Vice Principal, KPIs and restructure							
Sharing experience (OUVP) and developing my research							
Staff focus groups and events							
Reviews							

Table 0.2: Representational mapping of portfolio elements against the doctoral Learning Outcomes (Sections Three and Four)

Section One

Introduction

In this section I will provide evidence of and reflect upon the 25-year period from 1989 to 2013. I believe that it is important to start with my undergraduate studies and my sandwich year because those years were instrumental in shaping my decisions for the future. It is not a coincidence that my sandwich year provided a mix of academic, adult learning and reflection, industrial application and problem solving, and commercial awareness as my placement company struggled to survive the recession. Of course, at that time I had no idea that those themes would continue to intertwine for me throughout my career.

1.1. Undergraduate studies: Computing at Newcastle Polytechnic

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

Contribution

After achieving mediocre A' level results in my School's Sixth Form I started on the HND Computing for Industry at Newcastle Polytechnic. There was a promotional poster up on the wall outside the Sixth Form common room and I was attracted as much to the picture of a sandwich as I was to the idea of spending a year working in a business whilst at the Polytechnic. I had contemplated and applied to undertake business studies but was refused entry to Newcastle Business School when my grades came through; I wasn't particularly disappointed because I didn't have much of a preference.

Reflection on Contribution

As a teenager I had no plans or desires to take a particular path or to live a particular life. I have always loved life and would endeavor to make the most of any situation. I can vividly remember explaining this to my mother whilst on a trip to Beamish to collect our puppy. I said that I was unsure what I would do after my O' levels and that I would like to start work. My parents were both FE lecturers and it seems they had already decided what I was going to do. My mother told me that I would be undertaking A'

levels and then going to university; and that was that. I wasn't bothered either way, I was just excited that we were getting a puppy.

I found studying for A 'levels in Sixth Form hard. Being in the Sixth Form was better than being in the main school, we had more freedom and a dedicated building, we were treated not quite as children and not quite as adults, I struggled with the curricula. The sandwich course at the Polytechnic was a good choice because it would get me into a business for a year.

The HND was oversubscribed. The Poly had 50 student places and so accepted 100 students expecting half of us subsequently go elsewhere, as was apparently usually the case. All 100 of us turned up and only half the students managed to enroll by the end of the first day. Not being one of them I was sure that I had lost my place, but thankfully not. The following day, the student behind me in the enrolment line was re-enrolling and I overheard part of her conversation with one of her lecturers. They were chatting about what they had been doing over the Summer and it turned out that the lecturer was also running a small business. This really impressed me, the fact that the lecturer would also be running a business and so could give first-hand accounts that would be relevant to his teaching; it struck me as being the perfect combination. I thought, "Wow. One day I want that to be me".

For the first week I had a headache every day. I was worried this might be down to the computer monitors, or that I might have a brain tumor. Sometime and many headaches later I began to realize that it was a tension headache and that worrying about it probably wasn't helping. Despite being tense I was immediately inspired by the lecturers and the polytechnic experience. By the first Christmas I found myself loving the course, the andragogic form of teaching and tutelage, the facilities and the atmosphere. So much so that I was disappointed when we broke up for the Christmas

holidays and I would return to campus to work with some of the overseas students who were unable to go home. I was developing a passion for higher education learning.

It some ways it was good for the department that there were so many students as it meant having twice the usual budget for computing equipment, however it also put the teaching staff under pressure. At the end of the first year there was a cull and close to half of the students failed, including it seemed, every one of my friends. Whilst on my placement year I was offered the opportunity to transfer to the degree programme when I returned, which I did with great delight. I knew that I would need to start making friends and working with fellow students who wanted to achieve a good degree; I made some good friends and we worked well together. By the final year the course structure had been updated to provide a choice of a Computing for Industry or a Computing for Business pathway. Having become less and less interested in the industrial aspects, I would graduate from the University of Northumbria at Newcastle with a 2:1 (Hons) degree in Computing (for Business) in 1993.

I was pleased with my achievement and I felt that I had a valuable contribution that I could make to businesses.

One of the lecturers, [REDACTED], became my project supervisor and mentor. I had chosen [REDACTED] because he had run a software company for several years and he was very approachable. I knew that I was going to set up in business and I wanted to learn from the one lecturer that I knew could give me first hand advice. If I needed a confidence boost, I would speak with [REDACTED] because he believed in me, he never once doubted that I would set up the business or that I would succeed at it. [REDACTED] would remain as my mentor for many years, we still keep in touch.

I could not bring myself to apply for any jobs but at the Milkround I met representatives from Durham University Business School's Graduate Enterprise Programme and immediately knew that this could be exactly the right programme for me.

There were many talented 'coders' (software writers) on the course. I could code, but not as well as some of the others. Where I found a personal strength was in understanding the user requirements and being able to work with coders and to interpret the business need by managing the development of an appropriate solution. During the third year we undertook an assignment for the Euro Info Centre / European Documentation Centre, a library department that was there to provide businesses and academic staff and students with information on all aspects of European documentation and legislation. I remained fascinated with wanting to come up with a viable solution for them and I would carry this work through to my final year project in the fourth year. Even after graduating I would look at setting up in business to develop a solution. On reflection one of the reasons I remained involved in trying to establish a solution for the University, was because I wanted to remain in contact with the University itself; I wasn't really ready to leave.

Evidence

[Figure 0.1 Graduation photograph](#)



Figure 0.1 Graduation photographs with Olga (1993)

1.2. Sandwich year at Byline Software (1990-1991)

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

I worked at Byline Software for one year whilst on my student placement. I have included details of my time there because the events helped to shape my ideas for my career and to reinforce my determination to set up my own company; it also happens to be my only full-time employment. Byline seemed like a good company to work for because it was small and I was also attracted to their location which was in the Mountjoy Research Centre, a part of Durham University. Once again, on reflection, I can see that I was influenced by the linkage of the academic and the commercial.

My interview was five months before I was to start. By the time my placement began, Byline had decided to move to an industrial estate in Spennymoor; I felt cheated.

It was a difficult year as Byline went through mercurial changes when they rapidly expanded the company from 12 to 25 staff, then contracted back down to 13, then became insolvent. In some ways I could not have asked for a better experience. I learned valuable lessons from my time there, even if this was about me deciding in some cases how I would not do things. Because it is the only time I have worked

fulltime for an employer, I would reflect on the experience many times over the following years.

Reflection on Contribution

I started at Byline with great enthusiasm, one of a dozen new members of staff to start around the same time. Our first job was to get everything installed in our new premises, a 1960s concrete building in the centre of an industrial estate. I was happy to be doing anything and I liked the idea of getting involved with all sorts of activities, being a factotum. Within days my various bosses made it clear that I was to stick to coding and stay within the technical room. I was on a steep learning curve; my only other experience of employment was working in a restaurant in which the staffing was transient and the management transactional.

I felt that my enthusiasm was being kicked out of me, by the bosses (everyone was my boss) and sometimes the clients. I was getting on well with one client and when she said how pleased she was that I was working at Byline and that she hoped I would be staying, I made the mistake of telling her that I was a student and that I would be there for a year. This resulted in her calling my supervisor to complain that she had been 'passed off to a student' and saying I was never to go near their system again. I was then told I had to lie to clients, to tell them I was a full time and qualified programmer. I kept a Work Journal and on reading it now, my time there was pitted with similar experiences.

At the time I absolutely hated being there.

I bought an old, petrol guzzling car, passed my driving test and commuted from Whitley Bay. My wage was £100 a week before tax, of which I paid my mother £20 a week board and it cost me £80 to keep the car on the road, meaning it was costing me money to work there and I had less money than I had as a student. The days were

long, eleven hours including the commute by car, thirteen if I went by public transport. After a couple of months, I was thoroughly miserable; a mixture of frustration, exhaustion, intimidation and generally hating every minute of it. I would be angry at myself for years for letting those people get to me, for allowing them to trespass on my emotions. I would focus on building emotional resilience as a defense mechanism. The MD would single out members of staff for reprimand at the weekly meetings and it was not uncommon for someone to leave in tears. He set the tone for his other 'accidental' managers. My direct boss was very bad tempered and prone to shout and swear at me whenever he fancied, a corporate bully. I realized later that he was an inexperienced dictatorial manager, his skills were in working alone, a programmer who was lacking in social intelligence and people skills.

Some staff were welcoming and kind to me. Before I passed my driving test, [REDACTED] would drop me off in Newcastle or [REDACTED] would drop me off in South Shields. I was pleased when [REDACTED] became my supervisor and it was his guidance and steerage that helped me the most. [REDACTED] was a qualified system developer and he explained to me in hushed tones that the two systems that Byline sold had been developed by the directors, who were self-taught programmers. He went on to explain that I was not going to be doing any software development but that we were software engineers, which sounded grandiose but apparently in reality it meant that we would spend all of our time fixing bugs in the code. [REDACTED] was very logical and his depth of understanding was astonishing, I learned more from [REDACTED] than from anyone else. There was no apparent logic behind the sudden company expansion except that the owners were trying to sell the business and they wanted to inflate its appearance. Some staff were left wondering what they were supposed to be doing. We had a trainer who was there for six months and never delivered a single day of training. Staff

were always worrying about the financial stability of the company. We were paid by cheque and on pay day there was a mad dash as we jumped into cars and sped off to Durham to be the first to cash our cheques, in case they started to bounce. We must have resembled a scene from The Cannonball Run.

Four months into my placement and it was clear that Byline was struggling to survive. I knew that I was only there on placement, but I couldn't help being as emotionally affected by the situation as my fulltime colleagues. We were sworn to secrecy and again had to lie if anyone asked any questions.

By the New Year, pay cheques started to be late and the directors spent a lot of time trying to persuade the bank to extend credit. One day we arrived to find the landlord had bolted the doors and was sitting outside refusing to let us enter because he had never received any rent since Byline had moved in. The Managing Director was a convincing raconteur and he managed to persuade the landlord to reopen the doors. Staff were looking for other jobs and this left me somewhat unsupervised for several months; when [REDACTED] left, I was really sorry to see him go.

By the time I left, I was overdue three months' pay and I had to make a claim through the Insolvency Service, I was also more determined that I would run my own business and that I would learn from some of the mistakes made at Byline, mistakes I observed and would reflect on many times.

Evidence

Figure 0.2 Bywords - Byline newsletter

by words

THE BYLINE GROUP NEWSLETTER

ISSUE ONE

BYLINE ON THE MOVE



Computer systems for growing businesses

George Perfect with staff outside the new Byline Group Headquarters.

GOING UP DOWN UNDER

Export efforts are on the up through Byline's new operation down under.

The Byline Group is setting up Byline Software Australia Ltd which is entering a joint venture with Pick Products of Sydney, New South Wales. Byline Software Australia will distribute and support Byline products throughout Australia.



"Unlike other software companies selling to Australia, ours will not be an arm's length, sales only operation," explains managing director George Perfect. "Our products are being modified to take account of Australian legislation, accounting requirements and terminology."

"But most importantly our people there will be able to carry out maintenance and improvements independently and on the spot."

The joint venture was brought together by IBM Australia, which uniquely within IBM worldwide has a Pick operating system licence.

Market sectors will be similar to those for products on sale in the UK. Adminstate, the property management system, will be sold to property companies and financial institutions. Balance accounting, stock and production control systems will be aimed at wholesaling and manufacturing operations.

Byline Software Australia will become operational shortly, but has already started to recruit technical support, sales, marketing and administration staff for its Sydney office.

Bridging the North South divide

Byline has recently opened an office in the south east of England to be closer to many of its major customers.

The office will be headed by Philip Kirton, Byline's recently appointed sales manager who lives in the Marlow area.

The new office in High Wycombe makes good commercial sense, explains Philip Kirton.

"We are serving big firms like insurance companies and those with major property portfolios. Many of these have their computer operations in the south east. Getting a sales and support base near to them makes commercial sense and is essential if we are to meet our growth targets over the next three years."



Byline's new South of England office at Chancery Court, High Wycombe.

Figure 0.2 Bywords - Byline newsletter

1.3. Durham University Business School's (DUBS) Graduate Enterprise Programme (GEP)

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

The DUBS Graduate Enterprise Programme was sponsored by Northumbrian Water Group and core funded through the Training and Enterprise Council. It was a programme designed to help twenty recent graduates to start their own business, through a mix of residential intensive study, mentoring support and off-site team working activities. The programme lasted twelve months, with six months fairly intensive foundation work and then the mentoring and guidance throughout the second six months. A number of the participants 'Geppers' are still running their own businesses, so the programme was clearly a success.

Reflection on Contribution

When I started, I was very excited but also apprehensive about potentially starting a business, I was afraid of failing. The more confident the other Geppers were in themselves and their business ideas, the less certain I became about my abilities and my ideas. When we went around the room to introduce ourselves and our business idea, I would get cotton mouth and be unable to string a sentence together. After a few weeks, instead of being clearer about my business idea, I seemed to forget what I was doing. I think that it was partly because I was concentrating on learning and looking at business startup theories, coupled with the fact that I was unable to convince myself that I had a viable business idea.

The Gepper cohort mix was good because we were able to share ideas and intelligence, and console each other when things went wrong.

Having the course mix of the academic and the commercial was very effective. Being at DUBS felt good, the location, the prestige, the lecturers, fellow students, corporate clients such as the bankers. At times we were reminded of our place, maybe we were misbehaving. I was told that there is Durham University, on the fringes of which is DUBS, on the fringes of DUBS is the GEP programme; the academics didn't like it, so we needed to behave better.

The Programme Leader, [REDACTED], was exceptional in his knowledge, business world connections and support. Perhaps most importantly, he showed he believed in us and he was patiently accepting of our frustration; I would try to learn from those strengths. He would continue mentoring me for many years and I will always owe him a debt of gratitude.

We were introduced to the subjects of sales, marketing, business planning, personality profiling, presenting, all aspects of setting up and running a business. The sessions I

found the most valuable were when we met with individuals who had set up in business, when we explored the hidden curriculum; they inspired me and gave me a boost of confidence. In one session we explored what was stopping us from setting up the business, what we thought would be our failing. I opened up and explained that I was not a Freemason and that I believed this would prevent me from succeeding in business. It seems funny now, silly really, but at the time that was what I believed. I became frustrated with some of the Geppers who seemed less than serious about starting a business and who resorted to name calling and bullying in particular the female Geppers. I cannot tolerate bullying and I cannot ignore it. This placed me in conflict with several of the group that had formed a clique of which I had been a part, until the bullying. I found myself being unauthentic, so I split from the group and tackled their bullying. There was a good deal of conflict and it was difficult to remain focused on starting a business. It is no reflection on the Programme Leader, [REDACTED] or his Personal Assistant, [REDACTED]. They were both brilliant.

The GEP wasn't an accredited programme. We were told when enrolling that DUBS was working on accrediting the programme with a postgraduate certificate, but this never happened. Those of us who were the most disappointed were steered towards the MBA, but it was too expensive for recent graduates struggling to raise some finance to establish a business.

I would later be asked to return to DUBS as a guest speaker and to be a business mentor, both of which I was very happy to do.

Evidence

Figure 0.3 Newspaper clipping of GEP



Figure 0.3 Newspaper clipping of GEP

1.4. Establishing Nimis Information Services

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

During the period 1993 to 1997 I established Nimis Information Services and by sacrificing income for myself in the early years, somehow managed to stay afloat. I was projected from being a sedentary, introverted and naïve computing graduate, to being an employer, a salesman, a project manager, a researcher, a strategist, a bid writer, a book keeper and cleaner.

By 1996 my first employee and I had the genesis of a product which would win the Tyneside Innovation Awards, which felt like a great achievement following two years of work.

Reflection on Contribution

There isn't a particular day on which I started the business. I was setting up as soon as I left the Poly (in 1993) but didn't really have a client until 1994. I was living at my parent's house, working out of my bedroom on my old BBC Micro with my dot matrix printer, sharing their telephone. I would try to answer the extension before my Dad did as he would bellow in his trademark stentorian roar "NICK....PHONE". The business name alternated between Nimis, Nimis Information Services, and Nimis Information Systems, because I wasn't really sure what I was going to do. It was a difficult period, setting up in business with no money and no experience. All I had was my determination to live an unlived life of my father.

Carl Jung, (a Swiss Psychologist,) stated that:

"Nothing has a stronger influence psychologically on their environment and especially on their children than the unlived life of the parent."

My father is a fine artist, but he took a job teaching / lecturing to support our family. He was always telling me that I would become a teacher, that education ran through our family, it was an inevitable profession for me, that I was just fighting the inevitable. At mealtimes (the only time I really interacted with my parents,) my father would sometimes be supportive but then by the next meal he would want to know what I was going to do if it didn't work out. He'd tell me that everyone wanted to run their own business, but it rarely worked out; I came to dread mealtimes. My father was right to have such questions; I was plagued by doubts of my own. I was also a drain on their limited resources, my parents were by now out of work and my sister had just become pregnant. My mother, an eternal optimist, never questioned me in that way, if she ever had a doubt, she never let on.

I was afraid of being a failure and there was no way I was going to work for a company like Byline. I never allowed myself to even think about an alternative, not once, never, not one of my 60,000 thoughts each day over all those years.

Starting off, I felt that my age was an issue, people would comment about how young I was, so I stopped getting my hair cut. All this time I was reading books about setting up in business and selling, the thing I was most afraid of. People I knew would ask me what I was doing. When I replied that I was self-employed, some would smirk, or be sympathetic, the most common question was “What will you do when that fails?”, I wanted to reply with something witty or cutting such as “Oh, I don’t know. I guess I could always do your job”, but I never did.

I was still attached to both Universities, still not quite ready to leave, I wished we had some of the campus business units that they have in California, where students are encouraged and expected to set up in business after graduating. I felt that setting up in business was frowned upon in the UK, that it was not so much a choice as a situational circumstance, that I was a victim of a recession.

The Poly never did have any funds for the system they wanted. I remember when they finally told me, in that moment I could not comprehend a future. The following day I started looking for someone else who wanted a database developing.

My first job came from a referral from [REDACTED], via the GEP sponsor.

[REDACTED] was the Company Secretary at Northumbrian Water Group. He gave me my first paid assignment and really, he was pivotal in me starting the business. On the day that I had to present the project plan and costing, I was terrified. I woke and started to shake. I had a battle going on in my head, one side of me saying “You can’t do this. You can’t sell”, the other side said “Look, give it a go because if you can’t do this, then you’ve wasted all this time because you’re going to have to go and work for

someone; so do it". I became aware that working for Mr. [REDACTED] and NWG gave me credibility, there was a visible change in attitude when people found out that I was developing a system and undertaking research for Mr. [REDACTED], working amongst the executive team on the seventh floor.

It took maybe three years for people to accept that I wasn't going away, that I was serious and that I was determined. Olga (by now my fiancée) was starting to plan for our future and by 1995 was considering buying a house. The reality of my financial situation was to set in when I presented my accounts to the mortgager and they replied to ask if my entire income in the first two years was the six thousand pounds presented in the books (thankfully my fiancée could afford the house on her salary). One of my biggest motivators was the thought of asking Olga's father for her hand in marriage; I have never been more terrified of anything. I thought about that many times per day, I was certain he would ask about my prospects, but in the end he never did, he wanted me to love and respect his daughter, and this I have always done.

In 1995 I moved into business premises and took on my first employee, a huge and daunting undertaking. Now I would be responsible not only for my own situation, but someone else's too. A Prince's Youth Business Trust loan enabled me to buy some vital equipment needed to complete the NWG assignment.

I secured a DTI R&D grant towards a software development that was linked to my undergraduate work with the Euro Info Centre. It would help replace the mailing of thousands of paper journals, with electronic; something we take for granted today of course.


I was not a good recruiter or manager. Naively, I believed that anyone could do any job, they just needed encouragement and training. I recruited friends or via an employment agency, rather than on the basis of experience or qualifications. I was

then frustrated when staff would not or could not do a job, I blamed myself, not for recruiting them, but because I believed I was failing by not being able to train and inspire them. Managing staff was for me the hardest job of all and I saw the team as friends rather than employees.

Evidence

Figure 0.4 PYBT Business Magazine Spring 1997

Nimis moves to the rest of the world after award



NEWCASTLE company Nimis Information Services has won the Tyneside Innovator of the Year award for developing a software based system for brokers.

Set up in 1994 with help from the Prince's Youth Business Trust, Nimis is run by Nick Mapletoft, left, and Steve Gregory. They already have clients

in Germany and anticipate orders from France, Switzerland, Italy, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Iceland this year.

Nimis is also about to launch the first UK on-line shopping system on the Internet.

Contact Nimis on 0191 276 6677.

PYBT business Spring '97

Figure 0.4 PYBT Business Magazine Spring 1997

1.5. Nimis Limited

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

In 1997 Nimis was restructured and incorporated, primarily because I wanted to retain and reinvest profit, which I understood was more of a possibility within a limited company. I dropped the 'information services' or 'information systems' because we were by now offering information technology (IT) training and consultancy too.

At Nimis Limited I employed several members of staff to develop and support our clients and their software systems. Although my job role remained constant, in reality what I did would change many times as the business changed.

My interest in research and development led to Nimis attracting grant funding from the Department of Trade and Industry's SMART scheme and then to involvement with a pan European consortium in the development of an Electronic Procurement System for Europe (ELPRO), with a partnership that involved Sunderland University.

The first quinquennial cycle was about running from failure, there was little if any focus on trying to achieve anything specific. I had bold ambitions but would not and did not have the stamina to really 'go for it'.

The second quinquennial cycle was an opportunity for the business to grow and stabilize, with the need for me to 'grow up' and become a 'real' boss.

Reflection on Contribution

The restructure and incorporation carried with it a sense that Nimis was working and that it had a little more longevity. Still within the first quinquennial cycle, I remained focused on trying not to fail, operating tactically and focused on short-term goals.

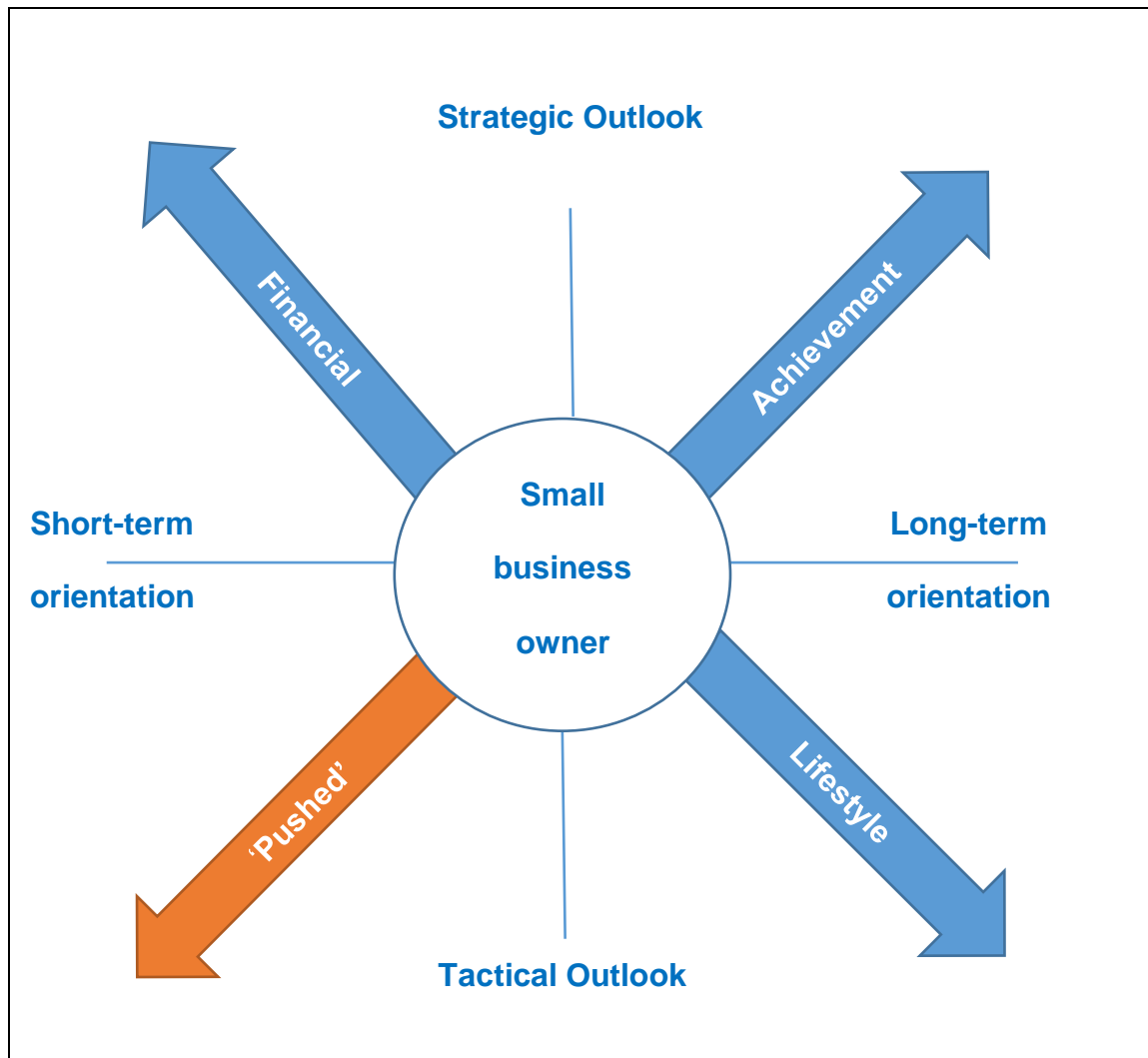


Figure 0.5 Personal outlook and orientation according to the four main motivating factors of small business owners – first quinquennial cycle

Whereas when running Nimis Information Services, I was looking to undertake R&D, bespoke projects and software developments, Nimis Limited would start by focusing on selling and supporting clients on the Filtered software.

It took two years to get Filtered ready for market and we would go on to have 40 clients in 12 countries, which felt great, but was a tenth of what I had hoped for. In reality the market size was much smaller than I had imagined and we would struggle to support users when we could not speak their language. I was so wrapped up in the R&D that I skipped the market research, it was easier to develop than to speak with potential clients. Once I started to sell the product, I would discover that the market was also

very small and our pricing model was not sustainable. Filtered could save our clients £10,000 per year, but in my naivety and excitement to gain customers from our competitor who had beaten us to market, I priced it at £1,000 to purchase and £500 per year to support. I was quick to realize my mistake, but it was hard to raise the price to a sustainable level. The opportunity to review the pricing came in 1999 when we would supply the daily data files together with the system, we raised the annual fee to £2,500, so the 40 client accounts effectively covered our overheads. The product 'Filtered' still exists today, via a separate company I set up for my former colleague, so that he can continue to support the clients from his Sunderland base.

Evidence

Figure 0.6 ELPRO project details

Figure 0.7 Press article on Filtered expansion


European Commission : CORDIS : Projects and Results : A pan-European electronic procurement system22/10/2017, 13:03

ELPRO — Result In Brief

Project ID: [AD1003](#)
Funded under: [FP4-TELEMATICS 2C](#)

A pan-European electronic procurement system

Electronic procurement is essentially the purchase and payment of goods and services. It can benefit both procuring entities and suppliers by improving the way they do business by reducing transaction costs. An EC funded project resulted in the development of a European electronic public procurement system that set ups and presents procurement and business information regarding small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and provides a single standard across all European member states.



© Photodisc

Electronic procurement technology adds significant value to the procurement services. It enables the acceleration of the uptake of electronic purchasing and payments by the procuring entities in public and private sector. Especially for SMEs, it is an actual helping hand to them to get better access to procuring entities marketplaces. However, the existing systems present many inconsistencies particularly of standards across organisations and authorities among the different European countries that prevent both SMEs from participating in the provided electronic procurement procedures and authorities and agencies from making smarter decisions, getting better value and minimising costs.

Motivated by this need this project resulted in the development of a complete system for the whole procurement activity, namely the Electronic Procurement system for Europe (ELPRO). The system developed covers the needs of all those involved in the procurement process chain, including the administrative authorities, public and private procuring entities. Most importantly, it addresses primary needs of suppliers and potential suppliers, particularly SMEs.

With the ELPRO, the emphasis is placed on regional telecommunication networks making the best of them to enhance the business procurement process. In this way, it is anticipated that the new system will promote electronic procurement facilities to regional SME suppliers and will also improve understanding of electronic commerce. More specifically, ELPRO will allow SMEs to directly exploit the procurement opportunities, to promote partnerships, to assure the timely and cost-effective delivery of products and/or services and to drastically resolve supply issues.

This software and service infrastructure incorporates compelling and value adding features, such as electronic data interchange (EDI) capabilities and fax on demand services that provide flexible, low cost, rapidly implemented procurement procedures increasing the overall value of the relationship between suppliers and purchasers, and adding efficiency to the supply chain.

Related information

[Report Summary](#)[Electronic Procurement System for Europe \(ELPRO\)](#)

Subjects

[Information Processing and Information Systems](#) - [Social sciences and humanities](#) - [Telecommunications](#)

Last updated on 2005-09-18

http://cordis.europa.eu/result/rcn/80519_en.html

Page 1 of 1

Figure 0.6 ELPRO project details

A great package deal

A TYNESIDE technology firm has got success all wrapped up after getting in touch with an organisation dedicated to helping businesses get ahead.

Following further development of a new version of its successful business software, Tyneside-based IT company Nimis was faced with the problem of designing packaging to get the product noticed.

By SCOTT ARMSTRONG
Industrial Reporter

Managing director Nick Mapletoft had not considered the importance of packaging for his product.

Before the launch of the new software, he sought the advice of Business Link Tyneside's supplier development officer, David Ward, who proceeded to put Nimis in touch with specialist designers SCA Packaging.

Following a consultation period, SCA produced a polished metal package which was both eye-catching and durable.

The design also allowed for the associated literature to be packaged with the CD, which was not previously possible.

Nick Mapletoft said: "When we developed the new product we only paid close attention to the product and price. We are very pleased with Business Link Tyneside, not only for helping us

solve our packaging problems but also for pointing out the problem in the first place.

"The result of the work with SCA Packaging is superb and we now have a product which will grab people's attention."

David Ward, supplier development officer, said: "Many specialist manufacturing or service-providing businesses have difficulty seeing the 'bigger picture'. Packaging is an integral part of any successful product."



PROBLEM SOLVED - Nimis director Nick Mapletoft, left, with David Ward

**Come home
to the
Chronicle**

South Tyneside
METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL



Figure 0.7 Press article on Filtered expansion

1.6. National Pathfinder and Prime Ministerial Launch

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

Following the market saturation for the Filtered software development, I was keen that Nimis should continue to specialize in the creation of solutions surrounding the public sector procurement arena. Although it was possible to harvest the higher value public sector tender opportunities, the lower value quote opportunities represented a better market entry opportunity for smaller companies (SMEs) and there was plenty of evidence to suggest that SMEs often provided more competitively priced solutions to buyers. Technology had moved on and the Internet provided a means of providing a centrally hosted and managed solution, avoiding some of the complications of a packaged solution.

By now Nimis had clients across Europe in the private, voluntary and local public sector. The development of our eQuote system however, would see us projected onto

a national stage and supplying directly to central government through their Office of Government Commerce (OGC). The main stakeholder meetings were held in Birmingham and consisted of representatives from the OGC, local public and private sector forums including the Chamber of Commerce and the Council.

I further developed the technology to provide a cross regional solution, which could easily be rolled out nationally. This piqued interest at a national level and the prime minister Tony Blair travelled to officially launch the solution in the North East.

I was able to demonstrate the system at our launch event, surrounded by colleagues and peers; I was very proud that after a decade of development, I had managed to develop something that was recognized as a 'pathfinder' project for central government. I was pleased that I was not expected to speak or to introduce the PM; I was so nervous I don't think I could have. I was well prepared for the demonstrations and the technical team had done a great job of getting everything set up for the day. The feedback was very rewarding from those who attended. A combination of the PM launching our system and the success of the demonstrations would instill me with confidence for years afterwards.

Reflection on Contribution

My experience of developing the eQuote system was a valuable one. In all it took ten years to develop a proven solution and Nimis was only paid for the running of a six-month pilot, so the value was not a financial but an experiential one.

The rationale behind open and transparent tendering was to minimize corruption and maximize the value being delivered through the public purse. Before Nimis developed a suite of solutions, nationally, a few hundred companies were alerted to the tender opportunities by post and it was only for the high value opportunities. As part of our

work with the procurers, organisations undertook spend analysis and became proactive in their engagement with suppliers. We would change forever public sector purchasing, it become more transparent and closed to the casual opportunist. Francis Bacon said, “Opportunity makes a thief”, we, with the partners and other providers, removed that opportunity. By 2006 we were responsible for sending tens of thousands of daily tender alerts to companies via our business change agent clients.

eQuote was adopted by the Regional Development Agency, One NorthEast under the operating name n-e-opportunities.com. The facility enabled the business development team at One North East to secure in excess of £600million of public sector business for North East companies over a five-year period.

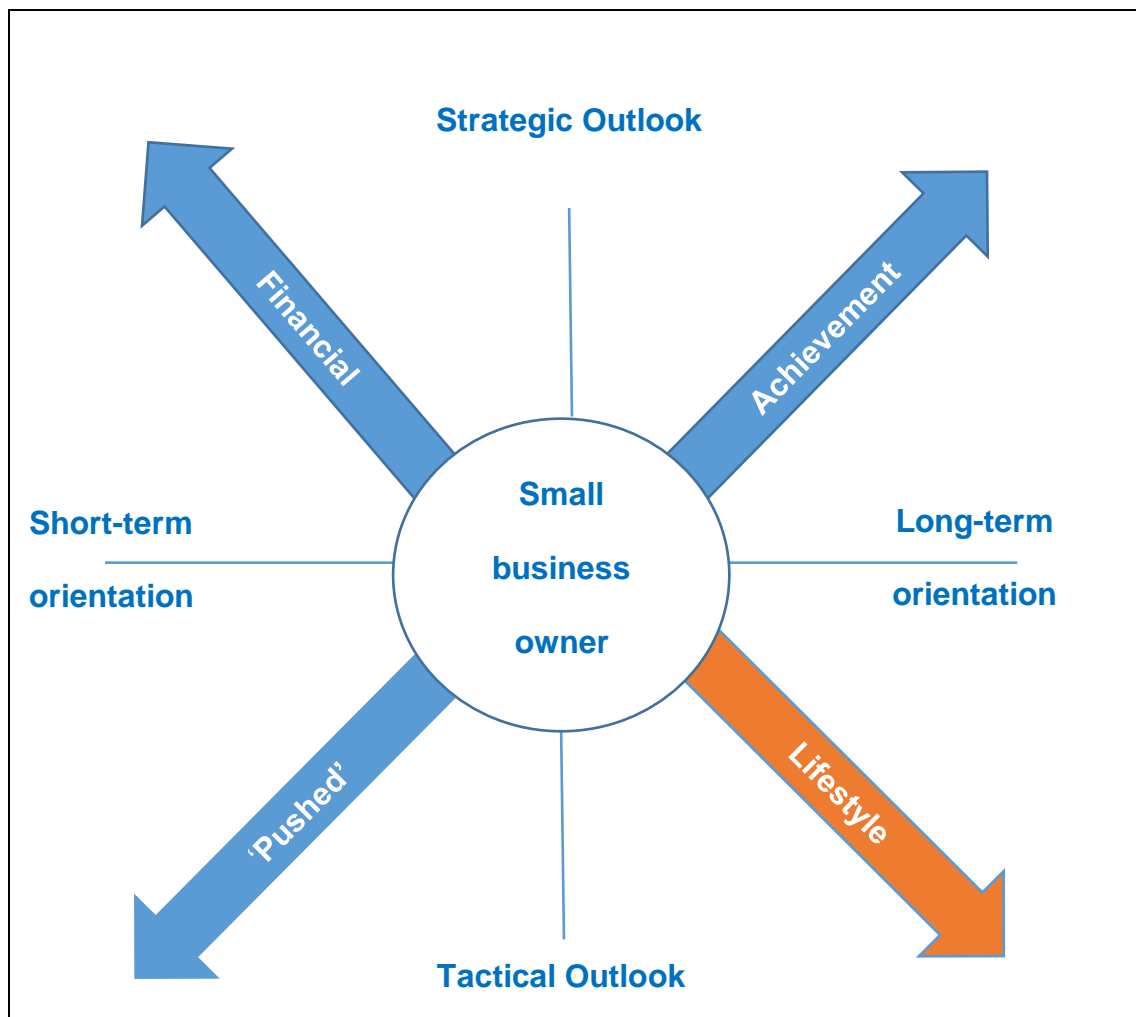


Figure 0.8 Personal outlook and orientation according to the four main motivating factors of small business owners – second quinquennial cycle

Such was the success of n-e-opportunities that One NorthEast (ONE) invited the Prime Minister, Tony Blair, to officially launch the site. To my absolute astonishment, the PM (apparently) said he would be delighted. I was convinced that something would go wrong and that the PM would not attend, so I kept quiet and whilst we promoted the launch, we never told anyone that the PM would be there. Afterwards people asked why I hadn't said that it would be Tony Blair launching our facility, I just said that for security reasons we were told not to divulge.

The launch event was held in a local hotel and ONE took charge of the arrangements. We had a main frontal short demonstration and then a kiosk for 'live' demonstrations at the back of the room. My team did a great job of ensuring everything worked

smoothly with the software system on the day and the ONE team, headed up by Norma Foster, did a fantastic job of setting up the main room and technology. This included the hiring of two large plasma displays, which were, at that time, a staggering price to buy. On the evening before the launch we had everything set up and Norma took a photograph of the conference room before locking the door and insisting that no-one must enter. The next morning, we arrived to find that one of the plasma screens was on the floor in a thousand pieces. We never did establish what had happened, but more importantly, we desperately needed another screen to balance the frontal display. There was a rush to get another matching screen from the supplier in Leeds, before the PM arrived. With minutes to spare and after travelling nearly 200 miles, the screen arrived and was set up before the launch; the couple of hundred attendees must have wondered what was happening. The organizational and contingency skills displayed by members of the team would be a lesson for me.

When Maitland Hyslop formally announced the arrival of the PM, I was delighted. In fact, I was so excited I didn't take in a word that was said, I would need to read the transcript afterwards to see the praise for our system and that the PM said that such a development "must receive our complete support". He also made the point that, being from the North East he was supportive of a local initiative, however as PM, he needed to consider the national need too. I was very impressed by Tony Blair's speaking skills and would try to learn as much as I could when in the presence of such a compelling speaker.

This national activity would come about through an OGC project called Supplier Route to Government (SRG). As Nimis, we had a frosty reception by many of the SRG partners who would meet in Birmingham. Local software providers and the wider business community were angry that a company from Newcastle would even be

considered to develop a system that had the aim of helping companies in the West Midlands to trade with the public sector in the West Midlands. On the face of it, it appeared hypocritical, but the reality was that only Nimis had developed a working, proven solution, which had the backing of the PM. I enjoyed being a part of the SRG initiative and our system came to be known as the National Pathfinder Project for Sub-Threshold Procurement in the UK. I needed to develop a resilience in the stakeholder meetings and to learn how to interact with and respond to the various types of stakeholders. The IT people rarely focused on our technology or even the system functions, instead they would interrogate me about certain policies, legalities and safeguards. At every meeting there would be more in-depth questioning on similar aspects, however I realized that I could turn this around with responses such as “That’s an interesting point. I would like to work with you to address that.” Or “That’s a very perceptive observation. It sounds as if you have experience of this already. Please can you share details with me afterwards of how we can overcome that?”. Soon the IT people stopped attending and we could get on with the implementation.

Our Pathfinder would bring the North East and the West Midlands together. We soon realized that there was also the need for public sector buyers to use a similar pre-qualification questionnaire (PQQ). Prior to this time, every buyer and often even different departments, used differed PQQs. This created a great deal of work for the suppliers, every time they wanted to bid, it also created a great deal of work in evaluating the bids. We worked on a layout for a standardized PQQ that would save thousands of hours of supplier and buyer time. The six-month pilot was extended again and again for close to two years as we waited for the tender to come out for the national roll-out. I had put off going on holiday for those two years and finally decided to book a short stay in Paris for my family. When the time came for us to go, the PQQ was

launched for the national roll-out. My family were understanding that we would have to cancel our trip as I needed to submit the PQQ and the deadline was ten days. Despite our involvement in the systems for harvesting, managing and disseminating tender opportunities, we really had no experience of completing the paperwork ourselves. To my amazement and horror, our consortium was not even shortlisted for contention. I'd spent ten years developing something, for it to be taken away and handed to our biggest competitor so that they would be the ones to capitalize on it at the same time as strengthening their portfolio. The system was launched as Supply2gov and would later be replaced by a subsequent government and renamed Contracts Finder. It remains in use today for every public sector purchaser in the United Kingdom

Evidence

Figure 0.9 Prime Minister launches Nimis' procurement system

Prime Minister praises innovative procurement solution



With the Prime Minister are (from left to right) :

John Bridge, One NorthEast;
Nick Mapletoft, Nimis Limited;
Bob Dennington, North Tyneside Council;
Maitland Hyslop, NERP

Prime Minister Tony Blair MP recently launched a new way of accessing business opportunities online, allowing companies to become more competitive and successful.

The North East's Opportunities portal www.n-e-opportunities.com utilises the successful eQuote system (www.allukitenders.co.uk) developed by Nimis Limited in conjunction with public procurement experts led by Bob Dennington of North Tyneside Council.

EQuote and n-e-quote.com are designed to aid purchasers who are looking for competitive sources of supply and suppliers who are looking for work opportunities. The system is rapidly gaining support as Local Authorities move towards their eGovernment deadlines.

www.n-e-opportunities.com is a new site, designed to encourage the growth of SMEs via this 'one-stop-gateway' for untapped business potential.

An invited audience at Hardwick Hall heard how the new online service offers fast and direct access to hundreds of business opportunities, which can be tailored to match the exact requirements of each and every individual business.

The Prime Minister said of the project: "Successful tendering for business is key to unlocking the potential of the Region. Any service designed to assist North East companies to compete more effectively in global markets, bringing jobs and wealth to the Region, must receive our full support.

"One NorthEast is the first of the Regional Development Agencies to offer this service to their area, and it is worthy of praise. The government is committed to placing the UK at the forefront of e-commerce development. Time and energy have been invested in ensuring technologies are in place to allow businesses and individuals to access speedy and reliable connection to profit from the benefits which broadband technology brings. The North East is mirroring these aims in an extremely positive way."

For more information, please contact Nick Mapletoft of Nimis Limited on 0191 275 5015. Alternatively he can be emailed at nick@nimis.co.uk

Figure 0.9 Prime Minister launches Nimis' procurement system

1.7. Management Consultancy and Innovation Support

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
Skills & Abilities	
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

The lesson I learnt from not being shortlisted through the pre-qualification process for a system I had spent ten years investing in, was a tough one. I was determined to understand exactly where I had gone wrong, which systems, processes and accreditations we should have had, what sort of wording I should have used on setting out our plan.

I would spend a long time working with colleagues speculating on what Nimis needed in order to tender effectively, examining the areas of financial standing, quality systems, staff training, experience, accreditations, references and credibility. I also realized that Nimis was not alone in needing to understand what it needed in order to be successful in public sector tendering, so we productized our expertise and analysis framework and created our Tender Readiness programme.

Nimis did not have all the expertise in house, so we engaged with a number of specialist business management consultants and trainers. Over a three-year period Nimis would support thirty clients via our Market and tender Readiness programmes.

The engagement with associate consultants was successful and Nimis would extend its consultancy to include support for companies struggling in the recession via a range of funded interventions that we tendered for. Keen to extend the breadth of our guidance and realizing that several of our consultants were experts in areas of technological advancement and innovation, we started to offer a range of part and some fully funded innovation consultancy services ranging from £3,000 to £45,000 each.

Reflection on Contribution

Nimis was at this time continuing to run the tender harvesting and dissemination facilities. Filtered had fewer clients, now around 20 rather than the peak of 40. Our online alternative, TenderTap, had a mix of clients all based in the United Kingdom. The combined annual licence income was covering our overheads, giving me the opportunity to continue to explore options for diversifying and growing the business. Reeling from the shock of not being chosen as the provider for the national roll out of a solution I had created (and something that would have secured our future for many years), I was looking for alternatives.

The disbanding of the Regional Development Agencies was to have a big impact on our tender monitoring services, most were our clients and they also funded downstream business change agencies who were clients. I needed to restructure the business and to establish a new income stream, fast. The thought of investing many more years in developing software just to see a competitor capitalize on it, was enough to put me off. Instead I started to look at complementary services.

The recession was biting into many companies and the banks were to bring our economy close to a crash. The government's response was to implement emergency

measures to try to resuscitate the companies and thereby the economy. Nimis was by now in a position to explore this area and providing management consultancy interventions to companies that were struggling would (for Nimis) be counter cyclic. I learnt a good deal from bringing together and then managing the consultants. They did not need managing in the way that Nimis staff did, in fact, they would not take to being closely managed. They were established professionals and sometimes their egos would need keeping in check, but for the most part they were very clever and very capable. I enjoyed working with them, providing an administrative and overall programme management infrastructure.

Nimis' success did not go unnoticed. We became a target of jealous people, perhaps those that were feeling the pinch. People we did not know and had never even heard of started making accusations about some of our consultants and our practices. I had never experienced this before, or at least certainly not to this extent. The time that I was taking to dispel the accusations was time that I was out of the business, it is impossible to prove a negative, it just eats into your time and credibility. I made a conscious decision to keep a low profile and avoid any publicity. There would be no advertising and no marketing activity undertaken, meaning we would only secure work through word of mouth.

Another public funding stream was to support companies with to innovate. The fund was primarily created for universities to deliver, but Nimis was successful in tendering and would support over 50 companies. The innovation projects and the hardship interventions were varied and gave me a great personal sense of satisfaction.

We often helped a company to demonstrate that they had the systems and processes needed to pass an audit, but some would then not follow them, until their next audit.

Nimis also started to deliver more training and some executive coaching and mentoring. I had always delivered some computing consultancy and some Information and Technology (IT) training, this however was a concerted effort to grow the business through helping clients through business management projects. We had some success in delivering non-accredited programmes, with some good outcomes for clients, but I began to question the general effectiveness of our interventions. I reflected on the business management consultancy we were providing. This had grown quickly and we had smashed our financial targets, but to do so I had recruited some consultants whose ethical values were at odds with mine, and I questioned what value we were providing to clients. It helped me to read about business ethics and ethical leadership (e.g. Cunningham, 2013) and values, studying Innocent (Germain and Reed, 2009) and Enron (McLean and Elkind, 2004). I felt it was impossible to continue as we were, so I restructured the business (again) and with colleagues, we began to share details of what our values might be. It would not be until five years later that we would create a strategic which formally communicated a set of ethical values that we would come together to document.

One of the issues with the consultancy and mentoring was that it typically meant working with one senior person, whereas what was needed was training of the workforce so that the correct procedures would be followed. This was to be the catalyst that led us into accredited training.

Once the government intervention funds were stopped, so did the consultancy; we just couldn't get enough companies to pay. The cost of sale was greater than the net worth of those projects we did secure and it was easier for the consultants to put in a cheaper bid without Nimis.

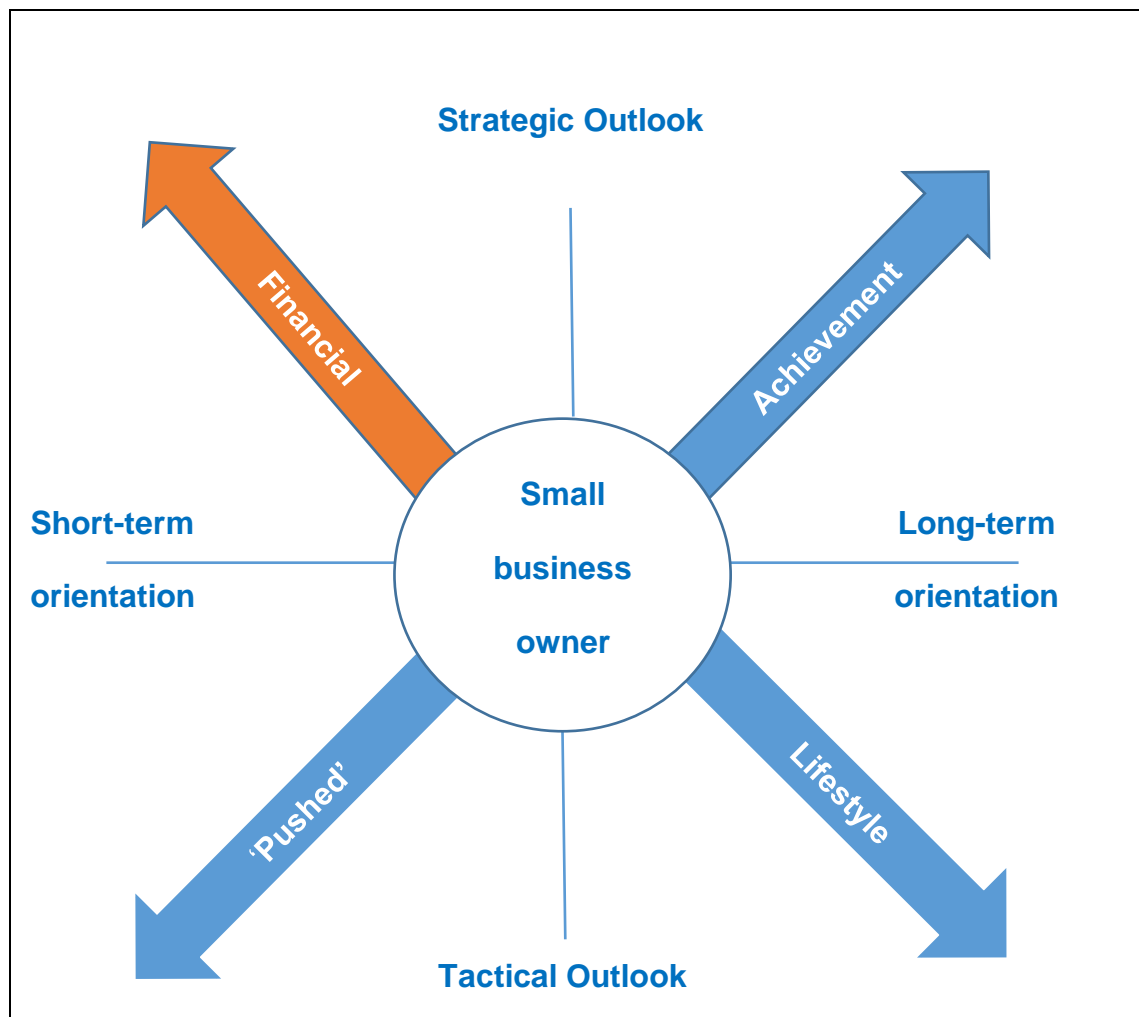


Figure 0.10 Personal outlook and orientation according to the four main motivating factors of small business owners – third and fourth quinquennial cycles

Evidence

Figure 0.11 Press article featuring an on-line clothes shop setup by Nimis

Figure 0.12 Press article regarding the lottery funded project to support 130 North East groups of and for disabled people to have a combined voice and Internet presence



Figure 0.11 Press article featuring an on-line clothes shop setup by Nimis

Web site tailored to meet needs of disabled



Joint enterprise: John Robson (chairman of NAGD) left, with Steve Gregory of Nimis, Ian McKee and Lee Jowsey (NAGD), and Nick Mapletoft, Nimis managing director.

AN expanded and improved Web-based facility is to be developed to provide improved access to help and information for disabled people in the region.

Newcastle software company Nimis is to do the work for the Northern Advisory Group on Disability.

The project is being funded by a lottery grant and will see 100 group members - each providing advice or assistance on disability issues - connected to the Internet and given a free Web site space and training. The NAGD's current site on the Internet contains databases giving details of events, publications and sources of assistance.

An area from Berwick to Stockton and including Cumbria is covered by the organisation.

John Robson, chairman of the NAGD, said: "Our site allows us to work with regional, national and international organisations on disability issues."

The Web site - www.nagd.org.uk - follows a joint project between NAGD and the Technology Application Group which, with Nimis, is a member of the Sarius IT cluster of firms involved in software research and development in the North-East.

Figure 0.12 Press article regarding the lottery funded project to support 130 North East groups of and for disabled people to have a combined voice and Internet presence

1.8. Accredited Training and Acquisitions

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

I have always spent a proportion of my time following sectoral and geographical changes and trends; this included keeping an eye on funded workforce training. It wasn't until 2008 that I started to plan a move into the delivery of publicly funded training.

It came about through client demand. Having established the importance of training the workforce in the ways of the business, Nimis started to look at the operational improvement and cost saving aspects, which was a good fit with business improvement, Six Sigma and Kaizen. At that time, we were working closely with another business management consultancy and they had secured a contract with Sunderland College to find learners for College delivery. We referred a hundred

learners to the consultancy in return for a very small fee. Nimis was more interested in following the progress at our clients than the fee that was eventually paid.

The College soon had too many learners for their delivery staff to handle and they partnered with the consultancy company as a delivery partner. The resulting client feedback was negative and Nimis decided against referring any further clients. Instead, we would develop our capability to deliver the programme we had communicated to our clients.

Through helping clients on consultancy interventions we had learnt about resourcing, quality systems, accreditations, strategic staff recruitment and development, the importance of having effective systems and processes. We would the same analytic and developmental processes on ourselves.

By 2009 we had delivery and management staff in place, the comprehensive health and safety processes, we implemented ISO9001, we were working towards Matrix Accreditation (for Information Advice and Guidance (IAG)), we had set up as an Edexcel centre and we had applied to become an EAL accredited centre. We had clients who wanted Nimis to deliver, so we were finally in a position to apply to the SFA for our own contract. There were three types of contract. The colleges had a Type A contract which enabled them to have the flexibility to deliver any funded qualifications to any learners based anywhere in the UK, this was 'granted' to them. Large, established private providers had a Type B contract. This had less flexibility in that those providers would be given guidance on sectoral and geographical areas in which they could deliver, with no automatic virement. Then there was a Type C contract, sometimes referred to as 'The poor man's contract'. This was where a

provider applied to the SFA for a contract to deliver a particular qualification to named learners and named employers. It was a much smaller contract and a provider could only apply when they could demonstrate the demand and that they had all of the staffing, accreditations, systems and processes in place. We invited representatives from the SFA over to see us several times so that they knew we were working our way through establishing our Training Centre.

Being an open process, Nimis applied for a Type C contract. Several days later we received a response through the tendering portal to say that the SFA was considering their position on new contracting and that they would respond in due course. When the SFA eventually responded, they passed our application and gave us a maximum contract value (MCV) of £550,000. We were delighted because we thought we were going to be awarded a contract, sadly we never were.

The FE training sector was capitalizing on the funding available through Train to Gain, which I thought was an opportunity for Nimis to enter the market. In retrospect, it was clear that Nimis stood little chance of getting into this market area when there was an abundance of funding, we would need to wait until there were significant changes and little funding available.

I was looking at every possible way to enter the market, an acquisition seemed the fastest route. An acquaintance of ours was retiring and no longer wished to run the North East of England Microelectronic Institute's Advanced Training Services (NEMI ATS) company. The company had some excellent people, a good reputation, ISO 9001, EAL accreditation, experience of having a direct SFA contract, a subcontract arrangement with TyneMet College, a large client and a successful Business Improvement Techniques (BIT) programme.

As is often the case with acquisitions everything was not as it first appeared. By the time Nimis acquired NEMI ATS, the staff had all been made redundant, the SFA contract had expired, the large client was engaging with another training provider, TyneMet wanted an even higher top slice and insisted that the work-based learners must attend all sessions at the College; never mind the fact that the learners were all based in West London. In addition, Nimis had by now achieved ISO 9001 and EAL accreditation of its own. Having said all of that, NEMI ATS still had some excellent people. Nimis was to strengthen its team by bringing some of those people over. We would absorb aspects of NEMI ATS into Nimis and then cease the trading of NEMI ATS.

We made repeated approaches to the North East colleges and private provider SFA contract holders and we made approaches to the SFA. This went on for two years as we experienced social closure. We went to forums, networking meetings and training events, we met with all the big awarding bodies. We just couldn't get in. It would take the end of Train to Gain and radical changes to funding which resulted in a dramatic reduction of private providers, before we made any progress. To assist new entrants the Education & Training Foundation (ETF) had been awarded funding to work with potential private providers. A head of department from Sunderland College called [REDACTED] whom we had unsuccessfully tried to meet, sent an eFlyer to one of my colleagues several months later. I seized the opportunity for Nimis to become a mentee and we requested a director from Sunderland college be our mentor. This was accepted and we made sure Sunderland knew that we had capacity and capability to deliver. It was good timing because they were underspent.

In 2011 we finally secured a subcontract partnership with Sunderland College. It was not until 2017 that we were able to apply for our own ESFA contract (successfully).

Our delivery started with the one client in West London. The (former NEMI ATS) trainer had fallen out with the new provider over money (he wanted more) and this was an opportunity for Nimis to present a programme and pay him what he wanted. We would deliver to 131 people over six to nine months.

Afterwards we concentrated on the North East and built our college contracts, mostly with three colleges: Sunderland; South Tyneside; New College Durham. Our delivery would slowly grow as our IT provision equally shrank.

Reflection on Contribution

My strategic intent was to have three distinct strands to the business. Something I would refer to as the 'three-legged stool', in order to demonstrate that we needed all three for balance and stability. This consisted of the software services, business consultancy and training, with the intention that each 'leg' would support the others through cross fertilisation. I recruited two non-executive directors, one with responsibility for the consultancy and one responsible for the training (from NEMI ATS). The existing Nimis IT Director was in charge of the IT and software side. The starting position was that the IT side was bringing in licence revenue of circa £200k with no external outlay, the consultancy £600k but with circa £500k external outlay and the training was emerging. I had confidence that together we would grow all three 'legs' of the business. My main focus during this time was in supporting the emerging training side because that was the most difficult to build and it needed the most effort.

A year later, things had taken a dramatic turn. The IT side was shrinking and now down to £120k (all licence income, no new clients), the consultancy was down to about £100k and coming to an end, the training side was circa £200k. Annoyed and frustrated, I released the two non-executive directors from their strategic responsibilities and presented a strategy paper to the Board which proposed that we should concentrate on the training side and that I should continue to devote my time to this 'leg'.

The time spent with the West London based client enabled us to develop our own systems, processes and experience in FE training. I had hugely over resourced the delivery, in terms of supporting the trainer with administrators, managers, IT support, additional supporting tutors for maths and English; so we ran the contract at a financial loss. The delivery of the BIT training was for the last 131 people across five client sites. 400+ staff had already been trained in the preceding four years. Naturally this meant that we were mostly training the laggards as well as new recruits. It inevitably meant that there was no future to continue the BIT training.

The trainer (formerly from NEMI ATS) needed a lot more handholding than our other trainers. He lacked any formal education but had passed his assessor qualification, so he was qualified to deliver Level 2 BIT; it certainly helped that his brother was the decision maker at the client. He needed constant praise, perhaps because of impostor syndrome. He was disparaging about every member of my team, the trainees, the staff at the client and the staff at the College. He would call me late at night just to vent and moan, which my wife was unhappy about and I found frustrating. It was a difficult relationship and my colleagues and I did everything we could to make it work, accommodating his tantrums and his rapacious demand. He was working a three-day week and we were paying him over a £100k per year; but it wasn't enough. He wanted

us to drop our management staff (so he could be paid more), he wanted me to sack our functional skills tutor in favour of his young daughter, who had just left school and had neither the qualifications nor the experience to teach. He demanded to have all of the training finances explained to him which I reluctantly did. At a point in the meeting when things got a little difficult, he started to have a heart attack, so I ran next door to get a first aider. My colleague [REDACTED] stopped me and asked what was wrong. I explained and [REDACTED] said, "Oh, don't worry about it. He pulls that one all the time"

I asked "Are you certain? I really think he's having a heart attack"

[REDACTED] replied "Nick. I'm 100% certain. He does that every time in the verification meetings when questioned about quality of delivery"

Furious at being tricked by his thanatosis, I picked up my coat and bag, and I left the building without looking back in on the trainer.

At the same time, working with two of my colleagues, we mapped an accredited and fundable leadership and management (L&M) framework to the non-accredited L&M programme that the client had. This would save the client several hundred thousand pounds each year and provide accredited, transferable qualifications through the Chartered Management Institute (CMI), to participants. It was a brilliant plan and would see us delivering there for the next five years. Presenting the mapping, the plan and the curriculum model required trust. We placed our trust in our trainer, the client and the College manager, only to later discover that our trainer, together with his brother who worked at the client and our College manager (who was also our ETF mentor) who had since been demoted and so unknown to us, was about to transfer to another college, were all colluding against us. The trainer took our new programme, set up in business and maneuvered us out of the way so that he could deliver the

programme we had developed, without Nimis. It was unbelievable. Happening just before Christmas, this was to be the biggest breach of trust I had ever experienced; I felt betrayed. When the government handed our quotation system to our largest competitor, I was angry. The difference this time was this was personal. This was someone we had invited in, trusted and shared with, someone whom we now realized had been plotting and planning all along, he had played me. I was further frustrated at not being able to do anything until after the Christmas break. Nimis could have taken legal action against the trainer, he was after all in breach of contract and had stolen confidential information in breach of our intellectual property rights. We would probably win if it went to court, but it would be an empty victory. After an agonizing deliberation and a miserable Christmas, I decided that Nimis would be better off concentrating on replacing the £500k per year of business that we had just lost.

It wasn't just a small change, our strategy was based around working with large companies, with the London client as a catalyst. We were going to drop our entire five-year strategy which we had spent 18 months working on. I no longer trusted London companies, I no longer trusted large corporates. I did not feel comfortable having trainers working at arm's length hundreds of miles away.

I can remember how difficult and painful it was for [REDACTED] and me to rebuild the training side of the company, focusing on North East based companies. The remaining IT staff would not do anything to help; perhaps they saw their side of the business being abandoned by us, or perhaps they did not want the training side to work, they looked as if they didn't care. To illustrate a point, [REDACTED] and I returned to the office at about 4pm after yet another day of knock backs, a day that followed over a hundred days of knock backs. The IT Director had not had a hot drink all day, because we hadn't been there to put a pot of coffee on for him. He grumpily mumbled

that [REDACTED] was to call a client who had an IT issue. [REDACTED] just looked at me. I was furious, I wanted to scream “We’re on our f***ing knees! Do something to help us you b*****d”. The IT Director was an ex shipyard worker. His formative years were spent practicing demarcation, the last thing he would ever do was step in to help a colleague. At the time however, I thought it was my fault. I felt I should have been able to motivate him and to change his ways.

Working with [REDACTED], a trainer we could trust and who had also had his L&M programme stolen by our former trainer, gradually we grew the training side back up. It was a tough year fraught with tension, working with new trainers, developing new programmes, delivering to new clients. I spent much of the year waking up in the middle of the night with a sense of dread. We had lost a lot of time, but we survived and in the long run we would be stronger for it.

The next year we developed our subcontracts and would continue to do so for the next two years, working for North East based companies whom we told ourselves were more trustworthy, we also spread our delivery across multiple clients to mitigate the risk of any further deception.

The IT side of Nimis was fairly stable (now at circa £100k incl. VAT) but there were constant tensions between the IT Director and the training side of Nimis. The Director had nothing to do, nothing left to direct, no staff to manage. It was clear that he resented the training centre staff and the time I spent with them. He became even more insular and would not even return a greeting to anyone; it was difficult and embarrassing in equal measure. I decided that the only fair thing to do would be to un-couple the IT and training. This was an incredibly difficult path for me to take. We had been good friends since our days at the Poly, but now, 23 years later, we didn't

even speak to each other despite sharing an office. I set up and financed a new company, transferred the money, the software, the hardware, all the IPR and clients over. Finally I bought back the shares in Nimis I had previously gifted to him, the uncoupling was completed.

For the first time in fifteen years, Nimis now had no annual licence income, no guaranteed income at all; it was quite daunting. We moved to new and dedicated offices that we had kitted out specially for the training company. Having a single focus and no negativity in the office, helped us to quickly grow the training company.

Evidence

Figure 0.13 Letter from the Training Manager of Johnson Controls Inc



Figure 0.13 Letter from the Training Manager of Johnson Controls Inc

1.9. Falling off a cliff

Learning Outcomes	
Knowledge	
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

2014-15 was financially by far our most successful year. Nimis had become the main New College Durham (NCD) partner and we were delivering across a wide range of FE programmes. We delivered 1,500 learner/ accredited qualifications, learner and employer feedback was outstanding, we were making a difference both to individuals and to the companies they worked for. We recruited additional trainers and expanded our administrative staffing. The first (and on reflection, the only) clue that things may not continue at the same level with NCD came when I mentioned to our NCD Manager in April that we had undertaken this recruitment and she suggested it might be prudent not to recruit anyone else until we had a better idea of what was coming up next (academic) year.

One of our trainers left our employment but not before causing us a number of issues. I employed another trainer whose first job was to spend four months putting right the delivery of his predecessor. I worked with him and brought in two part-time staff to

help. On reflection, I took my eye off the bigger more strategic picture at a time when I would usually be planning and contracting for the following year.

Everyone working at Nimis was busy past the end of the academic year as we handled the administrative and quality burden of the 2014-15 delivery through to September 2015. It became apparent that our college clients were not contracting. We were very aware of the delays in European Structural Funds (ESF), but they weren't contracting on the Adult Education Budget (AEB) either. In 2014-15 we delivered to 600 learners through AEB, starting the year with 400 places. In 2015 we were sheepishly told in June that we might only be allocated 200 places. When we received confirmation, it was only for 100 places. In August, whilst away on holiday, I received a call to say that they were in fact only going to give us 50 places to start in September. In the September, I received a call to say that NCD were over committed internally and that we could not submit any further starts. We had about 40 starts in and that would be our lot.

Without a direct contract, Nimis was completely reliant on the colleges. I knew that the ESF funding was delayed, but no one knew how long it would be delayed or who would win the competitive tender. I had not factored in that the colleges would react to the ESF delays by allocating their AEB funds internally, leaving partners with little or no delivery.

Reflection on Contribution

I took Nimis into FE delivery knowing that the market changes and that there are times of plenty and then quiet times. I had witnessed sudden growth followed by company collapse many times.

We had struggled for years to get into FE. We only got in when the funding made it difficult to deliver, really Nimis only ever had delivery when things changed and the colleges took longer to adjust to those changes. It is an uncertain market that is subject to governmental, political and educational changes that impact funding, eligibility, quality, delivery and overall viability modeling. Having said that, it was still a shock when it happened. I had, perhaps naively, come to believe that our year-on-year growth would continue indefinitely.

The lull in activity led me to question what I was doing and trying to achieve, together with trying to understand why every attempt at substantial growth over two decades was thwarted. I enrolled onto an MBA course (RDI (now Arden University) as a Sunderland University study centre) to analyse Nimis' activity and to compare with academic and business authors.

It was clear that Nimis' reliance on prime contractors was seriously flawed as it offered no guarantee of income. I quickly initiated a company restructure in an attempt to scale down to the smallest possible team needed to continue the business and to explore new avenues.

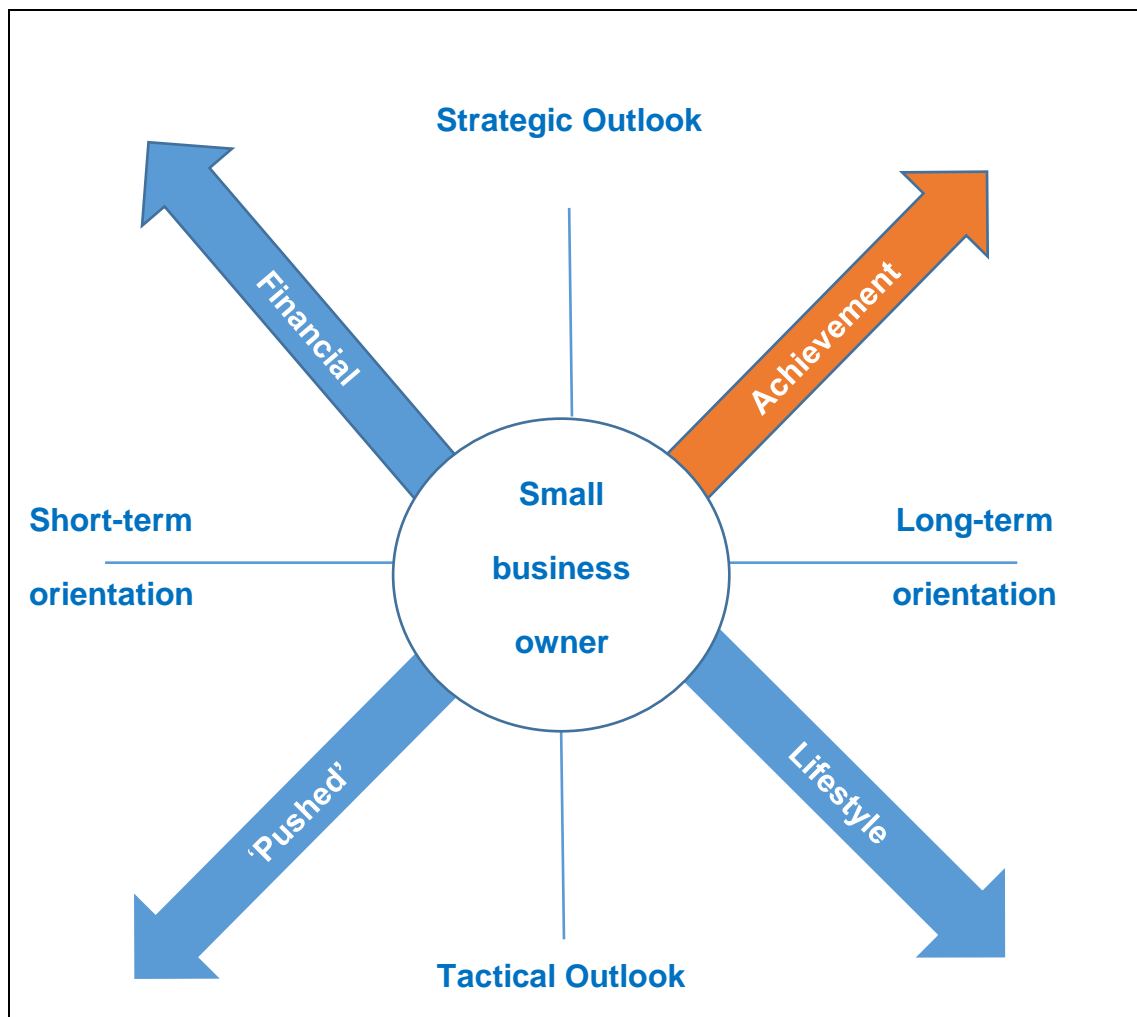


Figure 0.14 Personal outlook and orientation according to the four main motivating factors of small business owners

2. Section Two (2014-2015) - Change is afoot

Introduction

Section two includes reflective accounts of the motivators and agents of change that led to me setting up UCQ and the creation of a degree apprenticeship programme. This includes my business review and analysis, sectoral analysis and personal motivation to enter higher education (as a disruptor) and to deliver on degree apprenticeships. It also details participation on the Trailblazer groups and parliamentary attendance and input, together with details of my qualifications and fellowships.

Portfolio evidence	Learning outcomes						
	K1	K2	K3	K4	S1	S2	S3
Section Two							
Business and sector reviews							
Qualifications and fellowships							
Trailblazing							
Parliamentary debating							

Table 2.1: Section Two - Representational mapping of portfolio elements against the doctoral Learning Outcomes

2.1. Business and sector reviews

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

Throughout the 22 years that I had been running Nimis I had taken the company through several restructures, sector changes and attempts at rapid growth. Throughout this time I had also worked as a management consultant and as an innovation specialist for many clients, however, I noticed that for clients, as with Nimis, attempts to grow were almost always followed by a subsequent decline back to somewhere close to the starting position. It was almost as if there was a natural and accepted equilibratory level at which each company would operate.

I was incredibly frustrated that following rapid growth from 2012-13, Nimis' work would almost come to an unexpected stop by 2016 due to our reliance as a college subcontractor and on European Social Fund (ESF) training funds which were subject to an 18-month delay in tendering.

I recognized that whilst I had resilience and tenacity, I needed to study growth in the small firm so that I could overcome my limitations and break the equilibrium; this business study was the focus of my MBA research.

I understood that I also needed to study the adult education sector, to look at emerging developments and to attempt to establish a long-term plan that would be less influenced by short term fluctuations. Developments in the adult further education work-based learning sector included changes to the way that qualifications were funded and delivered. The degree apprenticeships were starting to gain some ground too and that meant that the FE sector was likely to have much greater competition from HE providers that would deliver apprenticeships and gain Skills Funding Agency (SFA) contracts. (See Thesis 1.1)

Reflection on Contribution

I have a keen interest in business models and both sectorally and geographically, I follow industry and client developments, and what other businesses are doing by constantly monitoring their financial performance via Experian, reading published reports and through my professional memberships. This intelligence, coupled with my previous experience of needing to change track and to restructure rapidly, enabled me to establish an outline idea for a new business within three months. I would take the

outline and share some of the ideas with key clients and staff through a number of strategy and research groupings which would help to test the outline and flesh out a plan. I followed this up by meeting with sector support organisations including the North East Learning Providers, CMI and UVAC, Trailblazer groups, employers and learners for further validation. I was conscious that the more people I shared my ideas with, the more I might be encouraging competition and revealing our intelligence, so I was trying to speak with the minimum of people necessary in order to establish the likely validity of the ideas.

Despite having already taken the business through several sectoral changes, it was tough. Desk based business research and reviews can be useful, however, it takes a leap of faith for the investors to make the financial commitment, and for staff to be enthused to put in the effort necessary, to get a new business off the ground. Whichever direction we were to take needed to be worth gambling all of the resources that Nimis had accumulated over 20+ years. It needed to be more important than money. It needed to be worthwhile even if it was to fail. This meant that it needed to make a significant contribution to practice and knowledge, and that it needed to be a personal growth opportunity for the staff so that we could personally and collectively benefit by learning key lessons from the attempt.

Staff members have different levels of tolerance to ambiguity and change. Those who could not or would not accept the challenge of adapting and moving to the new business needed to go elsewhere. I needed all the support I could get and I knew from past quinquennial change cycles that anyone negative would at best hold us back and at worst, stop us from making the changes. I find that saying goodbye to colleagues is always sad. The difference over time is that, whilst in my early career I

found it incredibly traumatic and I felt a personal and business to let staff go, by now I accepted attrition as a natural consequence of progressive development.

I am a positive person, however the constant daily knock backs, especially the social closure exercised by the UK universities we approached, eventually took their toll and I found myself occasionally wondering if we would ever achieve validation for our degree and institutional approval to deliver HE courses. I kept a small team of allies close to me and we would keep each other's spirits up, constantly reassuring each other that we would make it, that what we were developing was needed and that the harder the challenge, the sweeter the achievement would be.

Evidence

[Figure 2.1 A review of Nimis' revenue chartered over 24 years](#)

[Table 2.2 Detail of FE qualifications being delivered by Nimis by level in 2014-15](#)

[Table 2.3 An outline plan for establishing the Quayside School identity and accreditation.](#)

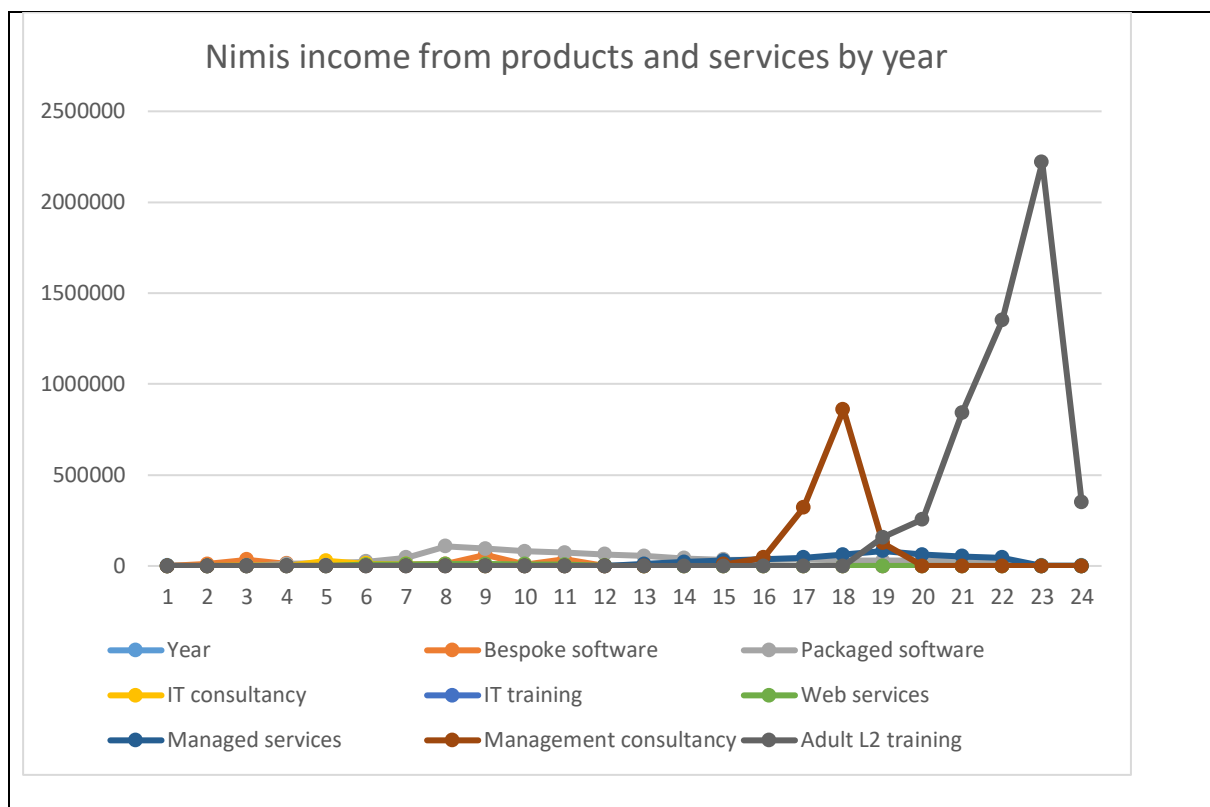


Figure 2.1 A review of Nimis' revenue chartered over 24 years

Level	E2	E3	L1	L2	L3	L4	L5	L6	L7
Qty.		5	334	1065	104		23		4

Table 2.2 Detail of FE qualifications being delivered by Nimis by level in 2014-15

Activity	When	Status
Gap analysis to identify requirements for QAA / university institutional approval and degree validation	02/16	Complete
CMI approval for level 4 to level 6 leadership and management in preparation for CMDA delivery	02/16	Complete
Join leadership and management Trailblazers	02/16	Complete
Draft regulations, policies and terms of reference for all QAA requirements	02/16 to 08/16	Complete
Establish a London presence	03/16	Complete
Creation of a QSoHE owned WBL honours degree	08/16	Complete
Establish student services such as .ac.uk , NUS, student railcards etc.	08/16	Complete
First phase recruitment of HE professionals (Academic Council members, HE tutors, consultants and supervisors)	09/16	Complete
Gain a direct SFA contract for degree apprenticeship delivery	09/16	Complete
New committee-based governance and leadership structure (Figure 5.1)	09/16	Complete
Finalise key documents: Self Evaluation Document, Strategic Plan, Business Plan, Student Handbook, Course Guide.	10/16	Complete
Gain institutional approval with the Open University (OU)	12/16	Complete
Honours degree programme validation through OU	12/16	Complete
Start pilot delivery	12/16	Complete
Continue to develop the virtual learning environment	12/16 to 05/16	
Ongoing review of activity	ongoing	
Second phase recruitment of HE professionals	03/17	
Next phase of student recruitment post levy	05/17 onwards	

Table 2.3 An outline plan for establishing the Quayside School identity and accreditation.

2.2. Qualifications and Fellowships

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

My decision to include evidence of my qualifications and fellowships is to show that I am committed to making a valuable contribution to the industry, commercial and educational sectors in which I operate (Figure 2.2) . Taking an active role in several communities of practice helps me to keep abreast of developments.

It is through these strategies that I am able to synthesise developments across the sectors by integrating the activities. (See Thesis 1.4)

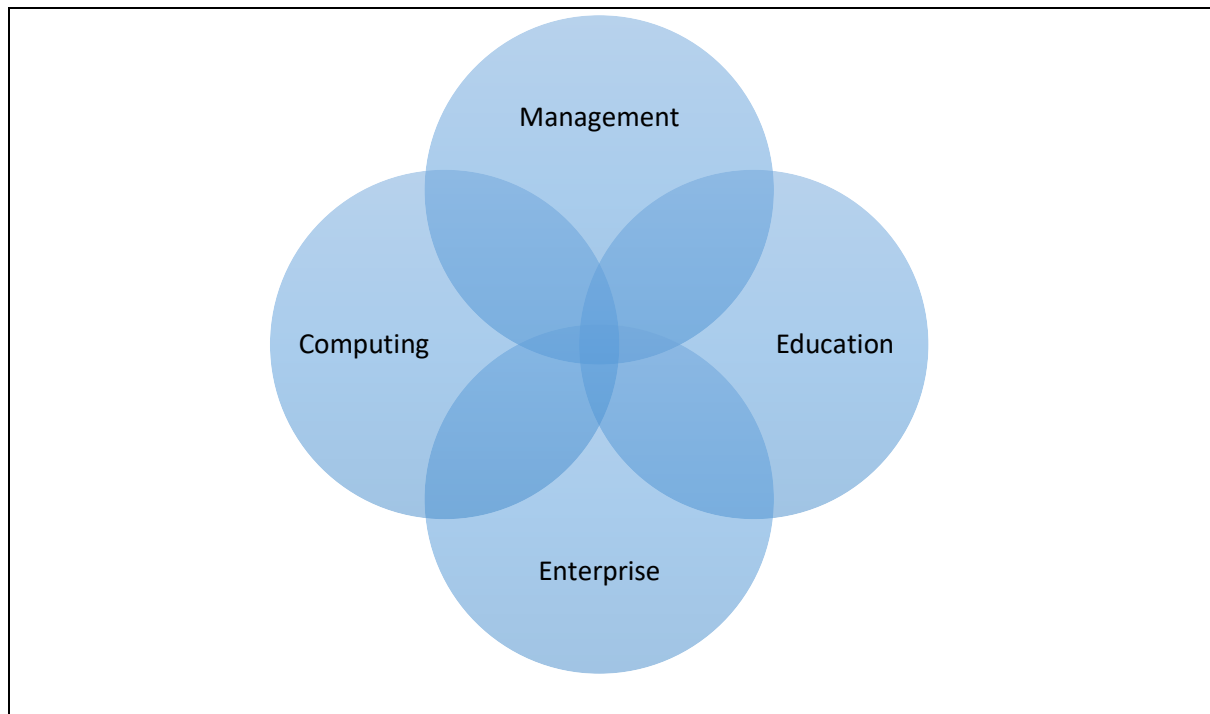


Figure 2.2 Venn diagram depicting my intersecting areas of professional interest

Reflection on Contribution

Through my undergraduate degree in Computing I gained the knowledge and developed the skills necessary to make an impactful contribution to my community of practice. The development of skills in systems analysis and design, user journey mapping, system testing methods and solution building and implementation, enabled me to provide a professional high-quality service and to share my knowledge with my community of practice.

Whilst still a graduand I started on Durham University Business School's (DUBS) Graduate Enterprise Programme. This was a yearlong non-accredited programme to help graduates to set up in business. The programme provided me with a valuable foundation in small business start-up and operation through a mix of lectures, tutorials, workshops and discussions with established entrepreneurs. I would later become a

DUBS mentor and guest speaker, contributing to small business start-up community of practice. My computing degree did not touch upon setting up in business, I remember struggling to understand the enterprise concepts, models and theories. Over the next twelve years I continued to study computing, management and enterprise topics through non-accredited routes. My focus was on making a success of my business, I gave very little thought to gaining recognised qualifications.

The PRINCE 2 training was undertaken when I was building the National Pathfinder Project: Supplier Route to Government (SRG2). I could see that there were considerable tensions between the multiple partner agencies (Office of Government Commerce, chambers of commerce, councils, Job Centre Plus, regional development agencies and many others) and my job in establishing the user requirements and creating a flagship development. I suggested that all the main participants undertook PRINCE 2 training so that we would have a common language and understanding; it was a great help.

In 2009, as I embarked upon my fourth quinquennial cycle, things were to change. Computing had become more about system integration and less about writing code. My own business needed to change focus to concentrate on what had become successful Management and Enterprise support streams. An analysis of our competitive tendering position identified the need for company accreditations (e.g. ISO 9001, Matrix, awarding body status,) and for my personal qualifications in coaching, mentoring and lean techniques. I started with the Level 2 qualifications and then progressed to levels 5 and 3 respectively.

In 2013, embarking on the fifth quinquennial cycle (having been running my own business for twenty years), I decided to embark on a programme of personal development that would include professional and academic qualifications across Management and Education. Both specialist areas were of equal importance to me, I could not bring myself to only follow one subject. I would often question whether I should be following only one subject area, my pursuit brought with it a financial burden and a personal burden that would impact on my family life. However, on reflection and having successfully completed my MBA and my MA Ed, it feels like the right decision. I had explored the possibility of undertaking an MBA when I first graduated (1993) but I could not afford the fees. On completing the taught elements after 20+ years of practice, I reflected that that I would have been unlikely to have been able to do so twenty years earlier because I often find it easier to learn by doing, rather than by being told. On embarking upon this educational development cycle, I was reminded of how much I love learning and being in a scholastic community.

My pursuit to understand and excel in different specialist areas has provided me with a varied and rewarding career and it looks set to continue to do so. I have been fortunate not to be governed by institutional or academic politics, to be my own boss in control of my own destiny, having a wife who understands me and allows me to spend so much time learning and disseminating, having had mentors who have helped support, encourage, shape and strengthen me.

Undertaking the Professional Doctorate is strengthening my academic rigor and helping me through personal reflection. I believe it will enhance my academic profile and further my contribution to practice and knowledge.

Evidence

Qualifications:

Figure 2.3 Qualifications: BSc (Hons) Computing

Figure 2.4 Qualifications: PRINCE 2

Figure 2.5 Qualifications: CMI Level 5 Management Coaching and Mentoring

Figure 2.6 Qualifications: EAL Level 3 Business Improvement Techniques

Figure 2.7 Qualifications: CMI Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management & Leadership

Figure 2.8 Qualifications: MBA

Figure 2.9 Qualifications: CMI Level 4 IQA (Internal Verification)

Figure 2.10 Qualifications: EAL Level 3 Assessing Competence in the Work Environment

Figure 2.11 Qualifications: MA Ed Teaching in the lifelong learning Sector
Figure 2.11 Qualifications: MA Ed Teaching in the lifelong learning Sector

Fellowships:

Figure 2.12 Fellowships: Chartered Manager and Chartered Fellow, Chartered Management Institute

Figure 2.13 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Administrative Managers

Figure 2.14 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs

Figure 2.15 Fellowships: Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts and Commerce

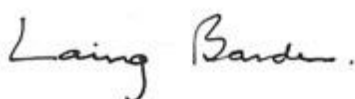
Figure 2.16 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Leadership & Management

UNIVERSITY of
NORTHUMBRIA  at NEWCASTLE

NICHOLAS MAPLETOFT

has been awarded the degree of
BACHELOR OF SCIENCE
with SECOND CLASS HONOURS (1st Division)
having followed an approved sandwich Honours programme in
COMPUTING

30th June 1993



Professor Laing Barden
Vice-Chancellor



Richard Bott
Secretary and Registrar

Figure 2.3 Qualifications: BSc (Hons) Computing



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THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

Nick Mapletoft

HAS PASSED THE

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REGISTRATION NUMBER

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Figure 2.4 Qualifications: PRINCE 2



Figure 2.5 Qualifications: CMI Level 5 Management Coaching and Mentoring

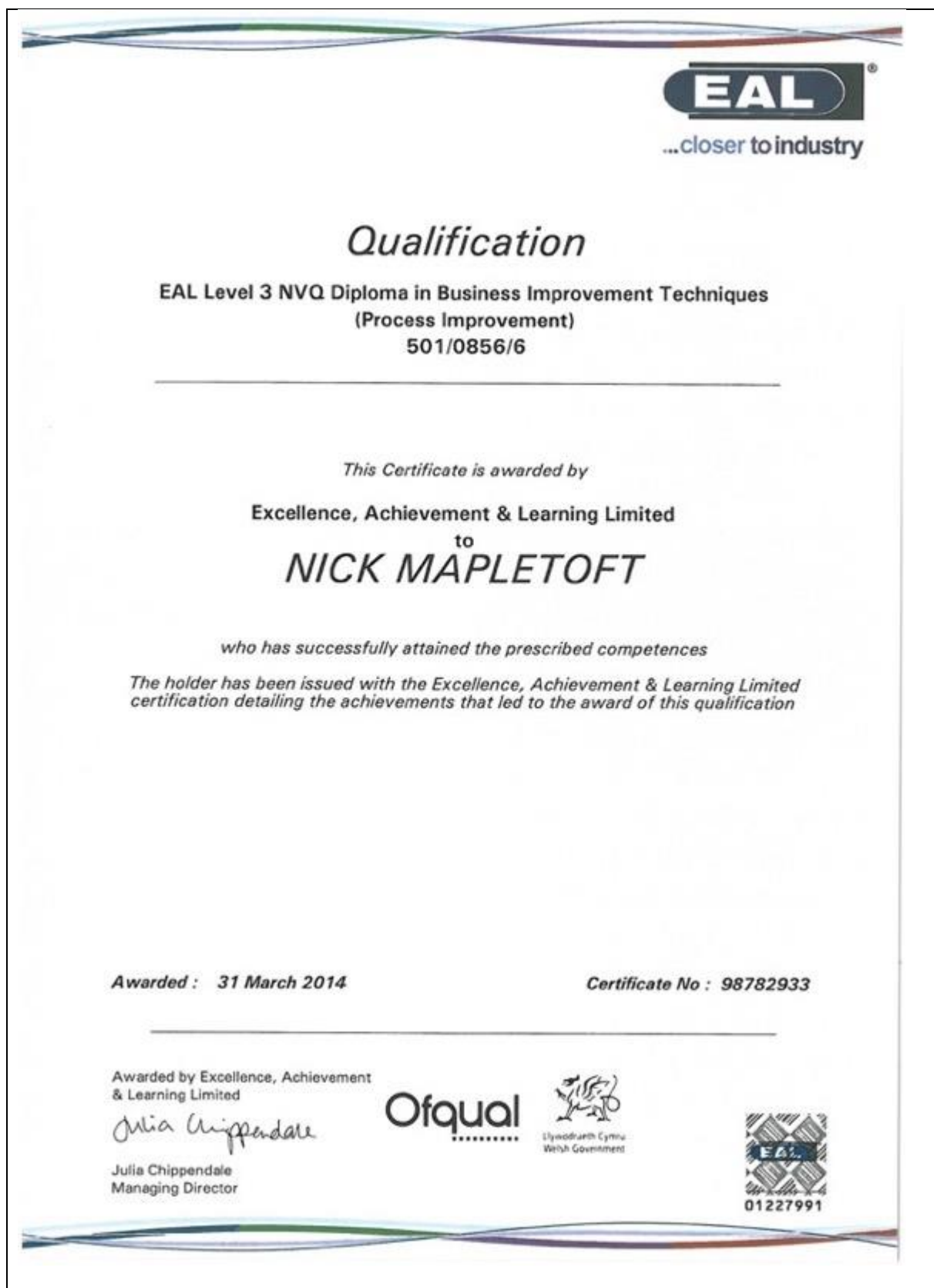


Figure 2.6 Qualifications: EAL Level 3 Business Improvement Techniques

This is to certify

Nick Mapletoft

has been awarded the

**CMI Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic
Management and Leadership (QCF)**

600/9460/6


Date Issued

06/07/2015

Learner Number

P04307004




Ann Francke, Chief Executive

Regulated by
Ofqual
For more information see <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk>


Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Figure 2.7 Qualifications: CMI Level 7 Extended Diploma in Strategic Management & Leadership



UNIVERSITY OF SUNDERLAND

Nicholas Mapletoft

HAS BEEN AWARDED THE DEGREE OF

Master of Business Administration

HAVING FOLLOWED AN APPROVED PROGRAMME

APRIL 2017

Prashant Choudhary

Director of Academic Services

S. Atkinson

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive

Full award details, including module results, are provided in a separately issued transcript.



00093336

Figure 2.8 Qualifications: MBA

This is to certify

Nick Mapletoft

has been awarded the

**CMI Level 4 Award in the Internal Quality
Assurance of Assessment Processes and
Practice (QCF)**

600/0350/9

Date Issued

03/10/2016

Learner Number

P04307004



Ann Francke
Ann Francke, Chief Executive

Regulated by
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For more information see <http://www.ofqual.gov.uk>



Figure 2.9 Qualifications: CMI Level 4 IQA (Internal Verification)

Qualification

**EAL Level 3 Award in Assessing Competence in the Work Environment
501/1843/2**

This Certificate is awarded by

Excellence, Achievement & Learning Limited

to

NICK MAPLETOFT

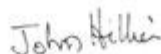
who has successfully attained the prescribed competences

*The holder has been issued with the Excellence, Achievement & Learning Limited
certification detailing the achievements that led to the award of this qualification*

Awarded : 15 March 2017

Certificate No : 99082399

Awarded by Excellence, Achievement
& Learning Limited



John Hillier
EAL Chairman

Regulated by

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For more information see <http://reginfo.ofqual.gov.uk>



01832925

Figure 2.10 Qualifications: EAL Level 3 Assessing Competence in the Work Environment



University of
HUDDERSFIELD

This is to certify that

NICHOLAS MAPLETOFT

has been awarded

the degree of

Master of Arts

with Distinction

having followed an approved programme
in

Teaching in Lifelong Learning

Dated this
Fourth day of October 2017

Ref. number: 07084556

R A Cryan

PROFESSOR ROBERT ANTHONY CRYAN CBE DL
VICE-CHANCELLOR

Kathleen A Sherlock

KATHLEEN A SHERLOCK BA (HONS)
HEAD OF REGISTRY



00073295

Figure 2.11 Qualifications: MA Ed Teaching in the lifelong learning Sector



Figure 2.12 Fellowships: Chartered Manager and Chartered Fellow, Chartered Management Institute

THE INSTITUTE OF ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT



This is to certify that

Nicholas Mapletoft

has satisfied the requirements prescribed by Council and as defined in the Articles has been awarded the grade of:

Fellow

of the Institute of Administrative Management (IAM)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Raymond Clarke'.

CHAIRMAN
Raymond Clarke

Membership number: 103073
This certificate is valid until: 1/9/2018



The Institute of
Administrative Management

Institute of Administrative Management
Coppice House, Halesfield 7, Telford, TF7 4NA, UK

www.instam.org

Figure 2.13 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Administrative Managers

Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that

Nicholas Mapletoft

has Membership of the Institute at the following level:

Fellow (FIOEE)

Membership Number: IOEE147395715428338

Ruth Lowbridge

Executive Chair

Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs

 **SFEDI® GROUP**

Figure 2.14 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs

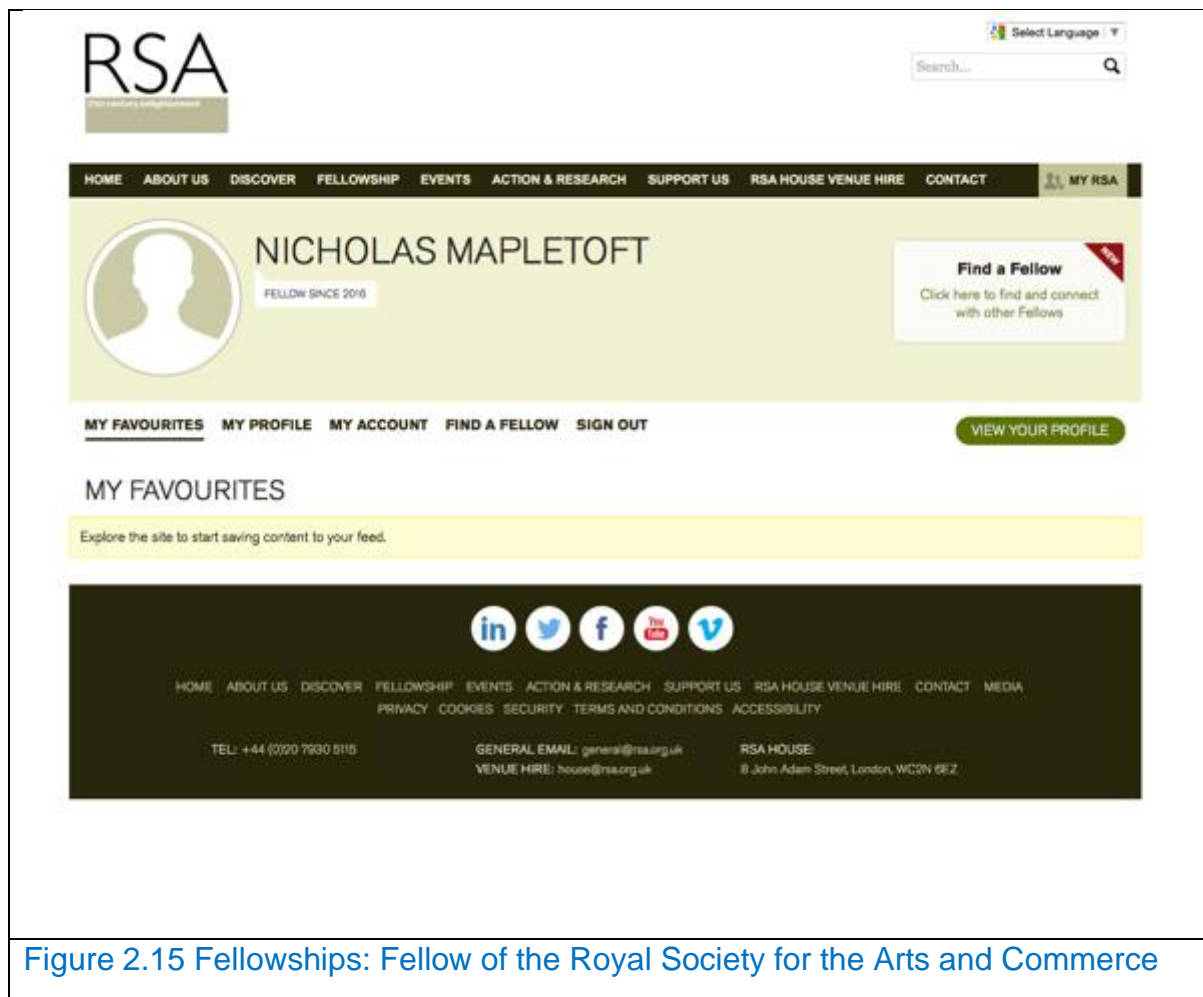


Figure 2.15 Fellowships: Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts and Commerce

Institute of Leadership & Management



Certificate of Membership

This is to certify that

Nicholas Mapletoft

has fulfilled the criteria to join the
Institute of Leadership & Management

Grade	Fellow
Membership number	10518430
Date of issue	13 July 2016

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Christine Abbott'.

Christine Abbott
Chairman
ILM

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Figure 2.16 Fellowships: Fellow of the Institute of Leadership & Management

2.3. Trailblazing: Active participation in the Trailblazer developments

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

In 2015 I started contacting the Trailblazer apprenticeship standards development groups to check on their progress and to see if I could add value. The business improvement technician trailblazer seemed to be progressing at a very slow pace having already been working on the standard for over a year. I travelled to see the team behind one of the alternative energy technician standards too; again I was disheartened by how long it was taking. I was asked by the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) to join the management Trailblazers and I agreed on condition that we worked to a maximum of a six-month timeframe to get it approved for delivery. They said they were looking at four months, so I was onboard. (See Thesis 1.0 & Thesis 2.3)

Reflection on Contribution

The Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) was approved for delivery in 2015. Serco were the employer lead but the CMI took responsibility for drafting the standard and negotiating with the Department for Business Innovation and Skills (BIS). I was pleasantly surprised that the CMI were keen for me to contribute to the creation of the management standards and that they took notice when I said that I could only get involved in they moved swiftly.

Much of the development of the Level 3 and Level 5 standards was achieved by email, with occasional meetings at the CMI London headquarters in Holborn. The first time I went I decided that Nimis needed a London address and so I secured an office directly across the road from the CMI on Kingsway. There was such a buzz about being in London, I felt more connected to what was happening and I felt that I was an active participant in the creation of new standards.

The Trailblazer development was divided into the Employer Group and the Provider Group. The Provider Group consisted of circa two dozen organisations, a mix of private providers, Further Education (FE) colleges and a couple of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). Only a small number of private providers attended the Provider Group meetings. Not a single FE or HEI provider ever attended, leading me to wonder if they wanted to be seen to be involved, rather than wanting to make an active contribution. Still, having them named as participants certainly aided the credibility of the Provider Group.

The Provider Group sessions were led by [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from the CMI, with input from [REDACTED] too. All three of the CMI representatives impressed me in different ways. I made a conscious decision that I would learn from the meeting and debating skills of the CMI and provider participants, that I would consider their style and approach. Ali Cox was leading the developments, her enthusiasm and passion were infectious, I couldn't help smiling as she would dash out to hold a conference with the BIS liaison and then return to give us an update; Ali really got things done. Petra was a more senior manager and was more reserved but clearly very comfortable chairing meetings and making an informed contribution. [REDACTED] was there as the Head of Education Partnerships and Customer Service. I was impressed at his interjections which were less frequent than other people but were always valid points and clearly put across. The providers were mixed, with some not making any contribution when we met. There were some senior people from private providers in the room and we had some lively and informative discussions not only about the standards being developed, but some sharing of our thoughts on strategic direction and observations on sector developments. We would meet several times afterwards at CMI events and later at the parliamentary launch of our completed standards.

Being an active Trailblazer participant gave me a lot of confidence. On the return to Newcastle after the first Provider Group meeting, I remember being determined to lobby the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) for a direct delivery contract. We had been trying to get a direct contract since 2008 and there was no realistic opportunity for us to tender. The HEIs had been given two opportunities to tender but this was restricted to HEFCE funded HEIs only. I was frustrated but also determined that we were at the forefront of developments and that we should be given an equal opportunity. My

colleague [REDACTED] and I would lobby this relentlessly and by the end of 2016 we would have our direct contract and started delivery of the CMDA as a Trailblazer deliverer.

Evidence

Examples of the Trailblazer communications:

Figure 2.17 Trailblazer communication email 1

Figure 2.18 Trailblazer communication email 2

Figure 2.19 Trailblazer communication email 3

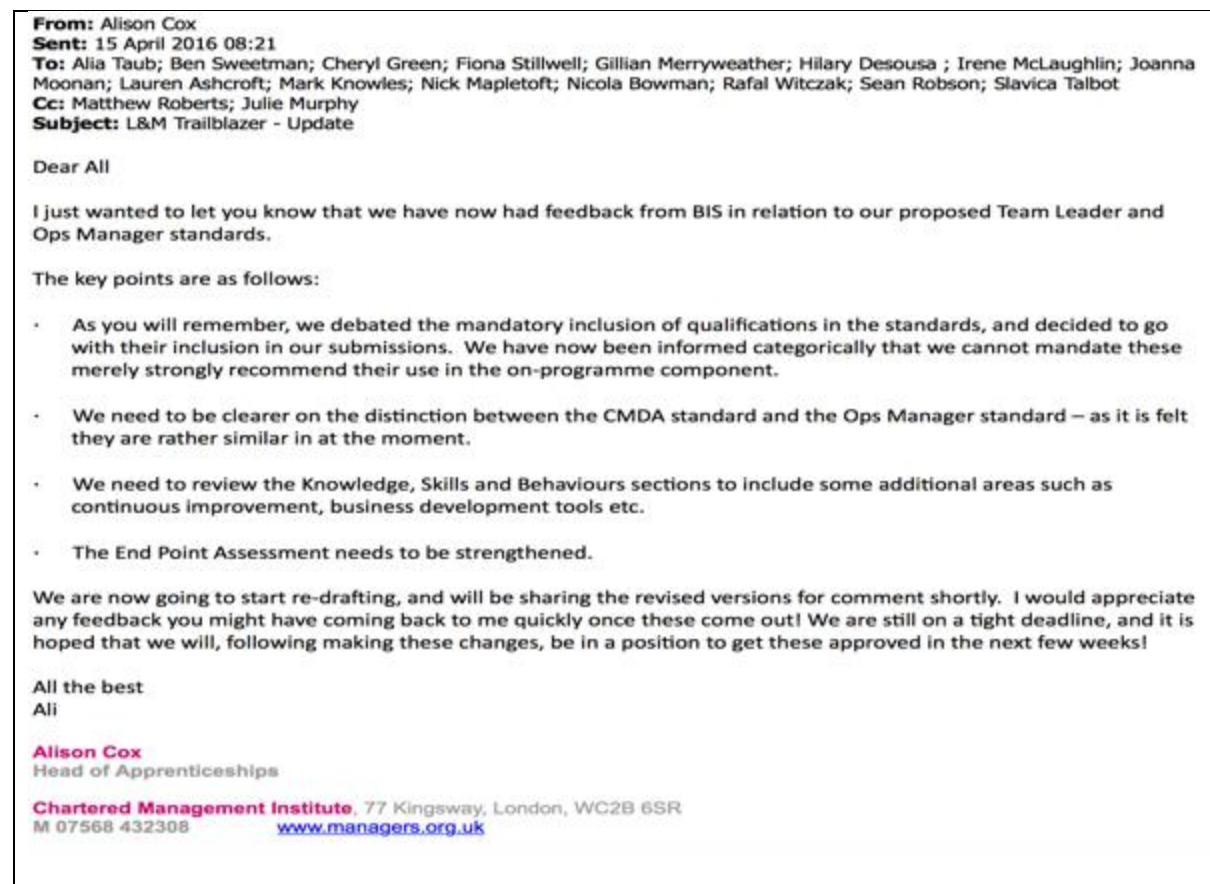


Figure 2.17 Trailblazer communication email 1

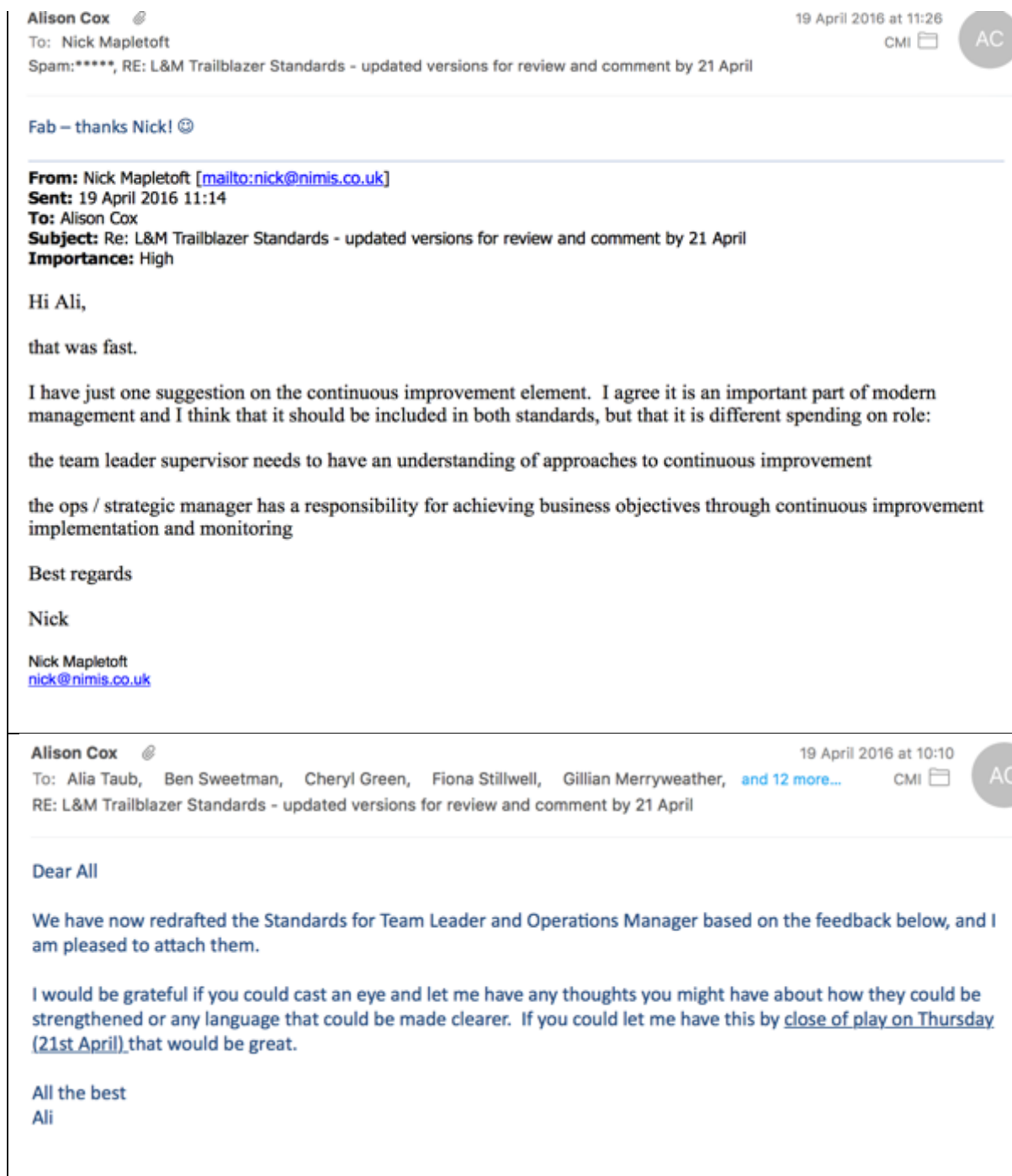


Figure 2.18 Trailblazer communication email 2

From: **Allison Cox** Allison.Cox@MANAGERS.ORG.UK 
Subject: **RE: L&M Trailblazer Apprenticeship Standards - Provider Steering Group**
Date: **25 February 2016 at 21:15**
To: **Joanna Moonan** J.Moonan@molteam.com, **Sean Robson** (sean.robson@quayside.school) sean.robson@quayside.school,
nick@nimis.co.uk, irene.mclaughlin@premier-partnership.co.uk, gillian.maryweather@getoncourse.net,
Rafal.Witczak@CityOfOxford.ac.uk
Cc: Mark.Knowles@dudleycol.ac.uk, **Cheryl Green** (cheryl.green@silverback.global) cheryl.green@silverback.global,
Stavica.Talbot@cityofbristol.ac.uk, **Sweetman, Ben** (Ben.Sweetman@qa.com) Ben.Sweetman@qa.com, **Ian McGregor**
I.mcgregor@bradfordcollege.ac.uk, **Roger Cunliffe** r.cunliffe@bradfordcollege.ac.uk, **Matthew Roberts**
Matthew.Roberts@MANAGERS.ORG.UK, **Petra Wilton** Petra.Wilton@MANAGERS.ORG.UK, **Julie Murphy**
Julie.Murphy@MANAGERS.ORG.UK

Dear All

I wanted to let you know that based on feedback we received and discussions between the co-chairs of the Employer Group, we made the decision to submit the Standards and Assessment Plans to the panel today which include the qualifications that are so important to employers, and which you as a group felt were a valuable part of the apprenticeships.

We know that this is not in line with the BIS guidance for the development of Standards, but we felt it was important to submit Standards that reflected the views and wishes of our employer and provider groups.

You will notice that the references to L2 English and maths are still in there – I did ask BIS for clarification on the position and was told they should remain as per the Trailblazer guidance, and therefore they are still in (at the moment!).

The Standards and Assessment Plans will go online for consultation tomorrow for the next couple of weeks. I will share the links with you so that you can encourage any businesses in your networks to respond.

We fully expect that there will be challenge to our approach, and will during the next couple of weeks prepare our supporting evidence for our approach. It may be that I need to come to you for specific comment for this evidence base – and I would be grateful if you could help as and when this is required.

Thank you all for your help and support – it has been fantastic!

As always, any questions, please let me know.

All the best
Ali

Figure 2.19 Trailblazer communication email 3

2.4. Involvement with parliamentary debate regarding the apprenticeship levy

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

In 2016 I actively set out to be at the forefront of emerging developments and policy implementation surrounding the Apprenticeship Levy. The Levy would not come into force until 2017 and back in 2016 there was strong doubt as to whether the Levy would come into effect, or whether it would be delayed. I knew that getting involved at a parliamentary debate level would be costly in terms of time and expenses, however I also thought it was necessary to be sure of what was happening and to try to provide some small influence, if I was to invest so heavily in a business that would be reliant on the Levy as its main source of funding. (See Thesis 2.3)

Reflection on Contribution

The first time I approached the Houses of Parliament I was excited and quite overwhelmed. I studied what I could of the external gothic architecture whilst queuing to go through the different levels of security. I had read that it took 30 years to build, up close I could see why.

The inside seemed ecclesiastical; just being there made me feel that I was somehow more important than I had been the day before. Our debate was held in the House of Commons, Committee Room 10. This is one of the best committee rooms, with ornate feature including quarter sawn oak paneling and green leather backed chairs featuring the golden portcullis logo.

I had known the Chair for several years and was able to observe how he had developed his skills, keeping the session on track. At the time I knew that I would have been too nervous to have chaired such a debate.

Our panel of speakers was a mix of the shadow education minister, the Chair, an awarding body and two sector representative bodies. I had no previous experience of or interest in governmental politics and I was a tad irritated at the negativity towards the government. Not because I have a particular allegiance to a political party, just that I find negativity to be irritating. It seemed that the point of the debate was for the shadow minister to gather points, criticisms and objections, for him to then send to his government counterpart. I remember thinking that this is probably how politics works.

One of the panel was Martin Doel, the then Chair of the Association of Colleges. He spoke quite quietly, eloquently, forcefully and with great intelligence. Of all the

speakers, I was most impressed by his contribution and made a mental point of some of his strengths so that I might improve my own speaking abilities.

The floor speakers varied. There was a consultant who suddenly interjected and the Chair pulled him up on it, asked his name, the company he represented and to clearly state his point; reminding me of David Dimbleby. The consultant was stating that the Apprenticeship Levy would not work, that employers did not want it and that the Construction Levy had not worked either. He was immediately challenged by a senior representative from one of the UK's largest construction companies who said that the Construction Levy was a success and questioned the consultant's evidence for his comments. It was clear that he had none. I remember wondering what he would have felt like having made such a comment and being unable to substantiate it in such a forum, in parliament. Other speakers were well prepared and it was evident that they had a point to make and that they had come determined to make it.

Attending debates such as this gave me the confidence to believe that I knew as much as anyone else (in the academic and commercial sectors) about what was happening. Afterwards at Nimis we established Delphi groups of learners and employers, and would drop into conversation our attendance at such events in an attempt to establish credibility and to demonstrate that Nimis was taking an active role.

Evidence

Figure 2.20 Photograph of my attendance at a parliamentary debate

NEWS

Parliamentary debate shines a spotlight

Key organisations from the FE and skills sector feel left out in the cold by the planning process for the apprenticeship levy, an FE Week parliamentary debate has revealed.

FE representatives flocked to the Palace of Westminster on Tuesday (May 3) to hear

from an expert panel and join the debate on a topic that has rocked the sector since it was first mentioned in July last year.

Sponsored by awarding organisation OCR, the event was chaired by FE Week interim editor Nick Linford and included

contributions from Martin Doel, chief executive of the Association of Colleges; Mike Cox, operations director of the Association of Employment and Learning Providers; and Gemma Gathercole, head of policy at OCR. Shadow Skills Minister

Gordon Marsden hosted the event, and within hours of closing the debate had submitted five written questions to Skills Minister Nick Boles, following up on the key issues raised. See upcoming editions of FE Week for the answers to his enquiries.

LEVY PUTS CHARITIES IN 'CONFLICT OF LEGISLATION'



ALEX ROBERTSON
@ALEXROBERTSON

Charities are caught in a "conflict of legislation" over the government's apprenticeship levy, a senior sector figure has warned.

The requirement for charities to ensure their funds are spent directly on their missions will put them in conflict with the levy, according to Beth Brook (pictured above), the chief executive of Fair Train, the group training association for the voluntary and community sector.

Speaking at FE Week's parliamentary debate on the levy, she said: "There seems to be a conflict of legislation — charities and charity trustees need to make sure charity funding is spent on beneficiaries, and now we have a tax that is coming in that means that charities then need to be spending their money on something else."

Ms Brook's concerns echoed points raised by the Charity Finance Group (CFG), a third sector body with over one thousand members, in a letter sent to Skills Minister Nick Boles on December 1, 2015.

Caron Bradshaw, the group's chair wrote: "Redistribution outside of the charity sector

of apprenticeship levy funding could call into question whether money given for public benefit should be allowed to leave the sector in order to subsidise private sector employers and support private benefit."

Mr Boles subsequently "accepted that there were difficulties around volunteering" in a meeting with the CFG in March this year, but "could not immediately offer a solution to this challenge", according to CFG minutes.

The meeting covered a number of issues, including the risk of the levy incentivising charities to employ apprentices in place of volunteers — a point that Ms Brook also raised in Westminster on Tuesday (May 3).

Three apprenticeship frameworks that had been developed specifically for the voluntary and community sector, covering fundraising, campaigning, and volunteer management, had also fallen off the agenda, she told legislators.

She said: "At the moment there's no apprenticeship specifically for the voluntary and community sector."

"We've got an issue there with supply and demand — we are expecting these organisations to pay the levy but there's nothing for them to buy."

Furthermore, she said, "neither civil servants nor ministers are referring to the voluntary and community sector in guidance", while messages have been "conflicting".

She claimed that while the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills was pushing charities to pay the levy, Rob Wilson, minister for civil society, had been "castigating" them for being inefficient, and urging them to spend less.

"Despite raising these issues with both politicians and civil servants, no one within government has even acknowledged them,

let alone done anything to engage with us to address them," she told FE Week after the event.

"I am not at all confident that the issues will be addressed in advance of the introduction of the levy next year."

Following the debate, shadow skills minister Gordon Marsden (pictured above) wrote to Mr Boles, asking "what discussions he has had with the Cabinet Office on the liability of charities and voluntary organisations to pay the apprenticeship levy".

BIS declined to comment.



Figure 2.20 Photograph of my attendance at a parliamentary debate

3. Section Three (2016)

Introduction

Section three details the setting up of UCQ. This includes the various Gap Analyses showing what we would need in order to apply for Degree Validation and Institutional Approval. Evidence includes the new organisation structure, policies and procedure documents, the BA (Hons) Professional Management degree programme I wrote with my colleagues with input from employer and learner focus groups, the CMI, ESFA, QAA and The Open University. Included are examples of brochures he brochures, website, and the HE Strategic Plan.

Portfolio evidence	Learning outcomes						
	K1	K2	K3	K4	S1	S2	S3
Section Three							
Trying to establish an HE partnership							
Gap analysis							
New organisation structure							
Policies and procedures							
BA (Hons) Professional Management – programme creation							
HE strategic plan							
Website and brochures							

Table 3.1: Section Three - Representational mapping of portfolio elements against the doctoral Learning Outcomes

3.1. Trying to establish an HE partnership

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

Although things are set to change through the 2017 Higher Education & Research Bill, it was and currently still is, a strange anti-competitive fact that, in order to deliver a degree in the UK, one must first of all approach an existing university to validate your programme. This means sharing your plans, programme and ideas with the established competition.

I believed that approaching universities as Nimis was unlikely to be the right way forward. Nimis had worked with and for several of the North East universities as IT system providers and I thought this might negatively influence them. We needed to

create a new identity for the higher education business (a business that of course did not exist). Nimis is headquartered in the old Ouseburn School so we decided to take the old school identity and rename ourselves Quayside School. Initially we renamed ourselves Quayside School of Leadership & Management, however we felt that was quite limiting and it gave no indication of our intentions to deliver higher education, it was perhaps a 'safer' name initially.

In order to give some credibility to the new company identity we started a competition among design companies for a new logo. We then had a full range of materials printed including pens, pencils, notepads, business cards and a prospectus summary. A prospectus which at that time was completely fabricated because we did not have a programme, let alone any experience of delivering one.

We started making attempts to set up meetings with universities, using our contacts where possible. This was a long and drawn out process with no success. They either met with us to fish for information or kept us hanging in the balance for months on end. One would have explored a validation arrangement, but I didn't get the feeling that they would help us in any way; their only other validated partners were based in Arabic countries. After six months I (once again) stopped to reflect on the process. It was clear that approaching universities with a local agenda meant they were governed by local politics, which would influence their decision on whether to offer validation and whether to partner with us. I decided to approach this from a different angle. What did **we want** from a partnership? We wanted a true partnership, we wanted to learn from our validators, we wanted our partner to know that we intended to apply for TDAP (now DAP) and not later penalize or block us in any way, but hopefully to work with us and support our application, a university that is progressive and open to new and

alternative ways of working, one that is not 'place based', one with experience of validating, one who companies and students would recognize and respect (the degree certificate would after all be awarded by them). I contacted Martin Doel who was CEO of the Association of Colleges at the time. I told him what we were looking for, told him about the challenges we had faced, and asked if he would suggest any one. He suggested we speak with The Open University.

It seemed obvious once he'd said it, he was absolutely right, they were the only university we should be speaking with. (See Thesis 2.1 & Thesis 2.3)

Reflection on Contribution

I have known for some years now that I need to be careful when deciding on a strategy and on setting targets because I become single minded in setting about achieving them. It can become overwhelming and all encompassing, the more difficult it is to achieve, the more determined my resolve.

I have titled this section 'Trying....' And this is a little tongue-in-cheek. In the wise words of Yoda "No! Try not. Do, or do not. There is no try"

I believe that in business, if you have tenacity, resilience, dogged determination and self-belief, anything is possible given the time, money and expertise. I want to pause here for a moment. In writing that sentence I look at it and think "Well, yes of course anything is possible if you have enough time, money and expertise." But it is not that simple. I'm not talking about having someone else's time or money or expertise. It is different when it is your own money, your family home and life savings that are at

stake, years and years of your own time that is required in the hope of achieving something. Your own self that must be developed to become an expert at something, with every likelihood that you will fail. Having self-belief before starting to achieve an audacious goal is one thing, maintaining this belief when faced with a sea of doubters and blockers over a period of months and years, is quite another.

I had contacted the OU earlier in 2016 but they did not publish their fees and would not share them without meeting. Once we had decided that they were the ideal partner, the issue of fees was much less important and we arranged a meeting.

Evidence

Figure 3.1 Creation of identity – name, logo and corporate colours

Figure 3.2 First prospectus summary

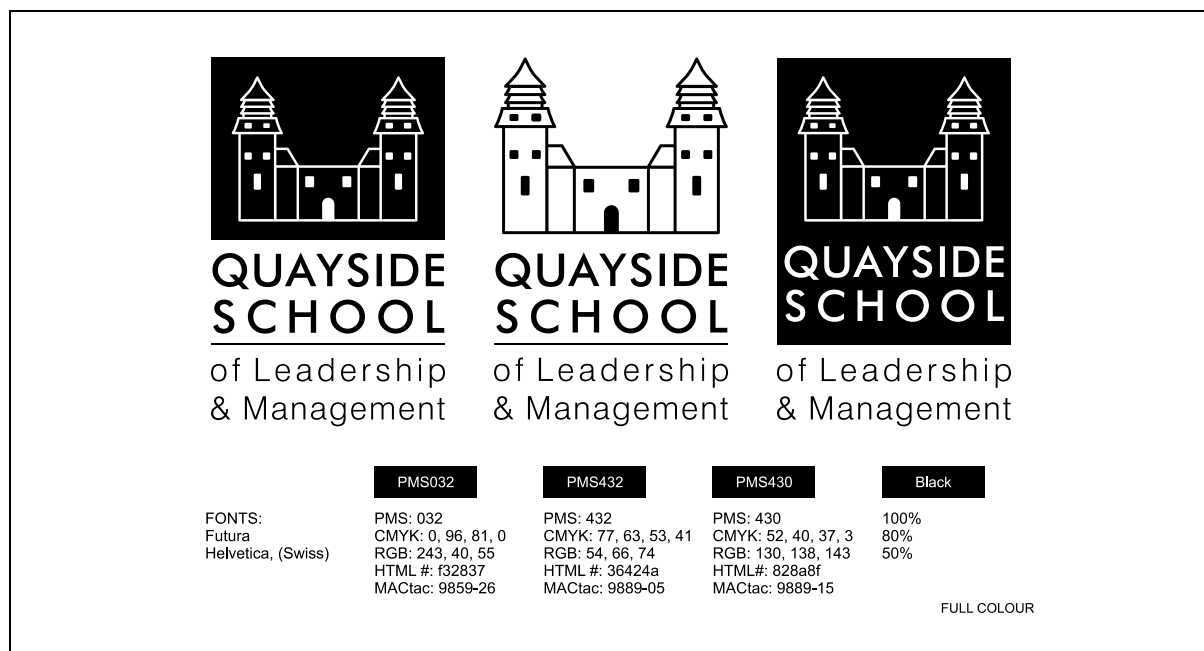


Figure 3.1 Creation of identity – name, logo and corporate colours

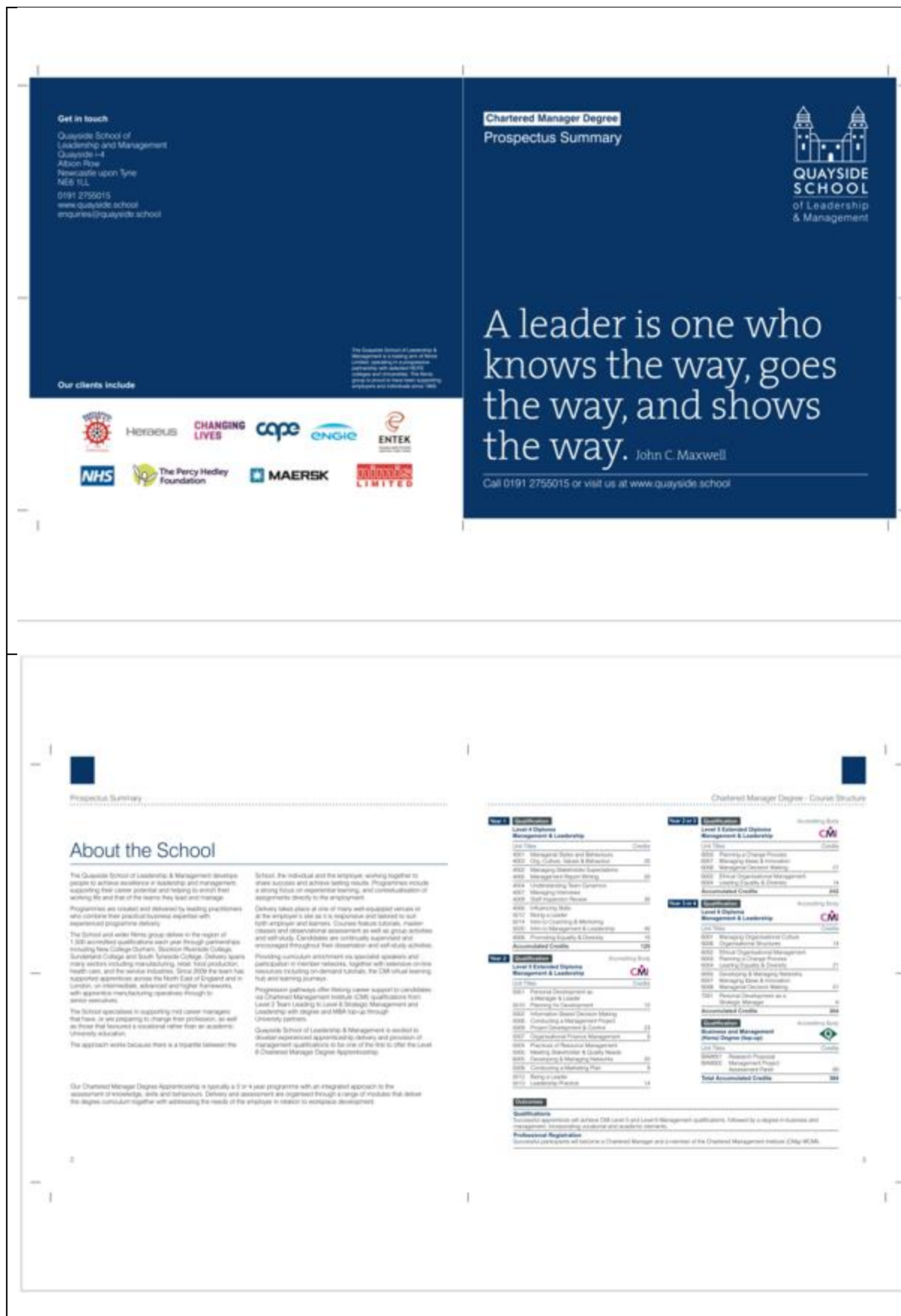


Figure 3.2 First prospectus summary

3.2. Gap analysis

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.

Contribution

Once I had established that an application for institutional approval was even possible, I sought to undertake a gap analysis against the OU requirements to see what we were missing. The result was overwhelming, the enormity of what we did not yet have, but that we now needed to gather and submit in three weeks for the first stage desk audit, was astonishing. Nimis had been successfully delivering further education for several years and during this time had created and implemented the necessary structure, policies and procedures, however we soon realised that the FE and HE requirements are very different.

Over time I created a number of gap analyses at higher and lower levels to help us to appreciate where we had gaps. (See Thesis 1.4)

Reflection on Contribution

We had restructured and there were now only the four of us, three who would be actively involved in the creation of documentation and implementation of these policies and validation. I felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of what we were doing but also excited at the prospect. We had been lobbying the Skills Funding Agency (SFA)

because they had opened up an opportunity for HEFCE funded universities to tender to provide degree apprenticeships, but this was not open to anyone else. We argued with anyone who would listen, that this was unfair and that not all universities came under HEFCE, that Quayside School was a challenger and the type of alternative provider being encouraged by government. We established alliances with the Chartered Management Institute (CMI) and the University Vocational Awards Council (UVAC) and some of their members and the CMDA Trailblazer lead. We emailed SFA contacts we could find. It was very quiet for months and then we received a call from one of the people we had contacted to say that there would be an announcement through the proper channels and we should keep an eye for it. Within days the SFA announced that they were opening for another round of tendering and that this would be open to all providers of higher and degree apprenticeship standards (Trailblazers).

There is a challenge when tendering to the SFA. The tenders take a huge amount of effort and the SFA doesn't want small contracts because they just aren't worth managing. We decided to bid for 40 CMDA places, at a time when there were less than 60 people on the CMDA across the whole of England. We were successful with our tender and became one of the first Trailblazer deliverers. But, at this point we had said that we were working towards validation and had two universities with whom we were furthering discussions and that our preference was the OU. This meant that we needed to secure Institutional Approval to deliver higher education awards and programme Validation, before January 2017, or we would lose the SFA contract. UCQ (as Nimis) had been waiting for an opening to bid for an SFA contract since 2010. After all this time we did not want to blow this opportunity by not being ready.

The employer and student focus groups were yielding positive responses and people were supportive of our approach and plans, joining us at the validation event which took place in the November (2016).

Evidence

[Figure 3.3 First HE gap analysis spreadsheet](#)

		Version 11-07-2016 - NM				
Item	Lead	Notes	Matrix planning	Matrix review	Validation	Quality Manual
a staff list which shows peoples names, positions, length of service and whether they work p/t, full time	NM	incl associates	Matrix planning			
a copy of your organisation chart which links into the staff list above	NM		Matrix planning			QM
Academic / commercial committee diagram	NM	split academic and commercial			P2 a	QM
institutional mission and values	All, NM				P1 a	QM
a copy of your strategic aims for the organisation	NM		Matrix planning		Validation	QM
a copy of organisational key targets/performance indicators	NM	SAR and QUIP	Matrix planning		Validation	QM
a copy of the aims and objectives/outcomes of the 'services' being provided	NM		Matrix planning		Validation	QM
key changes since the previous review	NM		Matrix planning			
actions taken against (or not as appropriate) development point identified at the previous review	NM	Actions taken document	Matrix planning			
staff appraisal	All			Matrix review	P1 j	QM
staff induction	NM	trainers and staff		Matrix review	P1 j	QM
quality assurance process/procedure	SR	check ISO, NCD etc.		Matrix review	Validation	QM
job descriptions	All, NM	updates		Matrix review		
Post holders					P2 b	QM
'partner' (e.g. Service Level Agreements)	NM	Colleges and trainers		Matrix review	Validation	QM
information provided to learners/employers(e.g. Plans, induction packs)	NM	college pack + QSHE brochures		Matrix review	Validation	QM
the institution's prospectus and other relevant publicity materials	NM				P1 b	QM
marketing strategies	All, NM				P1 c	QM
feedback questionnaires – including analysis and outcomes of the feedback	NM	NCD results		Matrix review	Validation	QM
Background, history, size, provision, student profile, progression and achievement	NM	NCD (see ESF overview too)			P1 d	QM
SAR and QUIPs	NM				Validation	QM
Terms for governance and academic board	TH				P2 c	QM
institutional strategic plan, ie	NM	SWOT and PESTEL			P1 e	
an evaluation of the adequacy of the following resources, together with a strategy for ongoing enhancement:	SR					
o teaching accommodation including appropriate specialist facilities	SR				P1 f	
o IT resources,	SR				P1 f	
o library and media facilities	SR				P1 f	
equality and diversity policies	NM				P1 g	
provision for student guidance and support, to include:						
o induction		Matrix and procedures			P1 h	
o career services		IAG and progression			P1 h	
o personal tutoring		1:2:1 IAG, tutorials			P1 h	
o support for students with disabilities		PAR, facilities, venue assessment			P1 h	
Employer engagement and review		Questionnaire and comments			P1 i	
recruitment, training and appraisals		Recruitment, CPD schedule			P1 j	
mechanisms for identifying staff development needs		TNA against appraisal and job spec			P1 k	
terms of reference of the academic board and its relevant sub-committees, such as a HE committee	TH				P3 a	
terms of reference of programme committees	TH				P3 b	
terms of reference of boards of examiners	TH				P3 c	
policies on academic appeals and complaints	TH				P3 d	
arrangements for setting, marking and moderating assessment	TH				P3 e	
assessment policies on:	SR					
g appeals	SR				P3 g	
h retakes	SR				P3 h	
i non-completion	SR				P3 i	
j plagiarism	SR				P3 j	
k students' disciplinary procedures	SR				P3 k	
l policies on recruitment, admissions, and attendance.	SR				P3 l	
a mechanisms for programme development, approval and monitoring					P4 a	
b terms of reference of a Quality Committee	TH				P4 b	
c student feedback mechanisms					P4 c	
d proposals for the briefing and induction of External Examiners					P4 d	
e the clear use of external reference points such as the UK Quality Code,					P4 e	
f evidence of identification of problems and speedy action taken to resolve them					P4 f	
g evidence that the institution takes into account feedback from tutors, graduates, employers, and external peers					P4 g	
h sample programme specification for existing HE programmes					P4 h	
i sample programme handbook for existing HE programmes					P4 i	
j sample programme appraisal documentation					P4 j	
k sample examination result sheets.					P4 k	
a evidence of support for staff involvement in subject or other HE education networks		JL & GD, NM Dprof, MC & SP, UVAC			P5 a	
b staff exchanges		JL & GD, MC & SP			P5 b	
c policies and resources to support and sustain research in accordance with the institution's academic objectives		Nm Dprof			P5 c	
d terms of reference of a research committee	TH				P5 d	
e evidence of staff engagement with peer review and subject networks		UVAC, ENFEC, Northumbria LP			P5 e	
f use of external reference points in programme design and development					P5 f	
g involvement of external peers in internal processes					P5 g	
h mapping of policies and processes against the UK Quality Code					P5 h	
Admissions policy and procedures	TH				Regs B 4	
Appeals and complains regarding Admissions process	TH				Regs B 5.1	
Time limit for registration on award	TH				Regs C 7.2	
Procedure and policy on student registration termination	TH				Regs C 7.5	
Attendance policy	TH				Regs C 9	
Policy on Moderation	SR				Regs D 14.5	
Academic misconduct policy	TH				Regs E 23.5	
Extenuating circumstances	TH				Regs F 24.1	
Membership of Boards of Examiners	TH				Regs G 26.6	
Policy for academic appeals and complaints	TH				Regs H 32.0	

Figure 3.3 First HE gap analysis spreadsheet

3.3. New organisation structure(s)

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

Nimis had an established and successfully proven structure, although we at this point had very few staff left so the four of us needed to adapt and carry out multiple roles. We needed to focus on the HE side of the business and considered options for how we could manage the FE side at the same time. I made what would turn out to be a disastrous decision, which was to offer to pay the FE tutors greatly increased rates for delivery, in return they would need to improve the quality of compliance paperwork by getting administrative support.

A new structure was created for Quayside School; however, this was a proposed structure which in fact had no staff at this point. This still needed to be the best possible forecast of staffing because it would become part of our plan.

A Committee structure was created based on examples we had seen at other private HE providers. (See Thesis 2.3)

Reflection on Contribution

The decision to offer the FE tutors greatly inflated rate of pay backfired unexpectedly. The offer that I put to them was that they would need to improve on their quality of provision, pay for administrative support and look to manage their own provision whilst we (Nimis) established Quayside School. Somehow this was translated along the lines of: we (the tutors) can take the extra money, control the delivery and drop our quality. If we all do that, what can they (Nimis) do about it?

This was unexpected. Some of the tutors had been working for us for getting on for a decade. Repeated attempts to improve the quality were unsuccessful. I was incredibly frustrated. The HE side of the business was taking even more effort than I expected and now the FE side was potentially in jeopardy. The rates I had offered to pay were so high that Nimis was going to make a substantial financial loss at a time that we needed to pay to subsidize the HE arm.

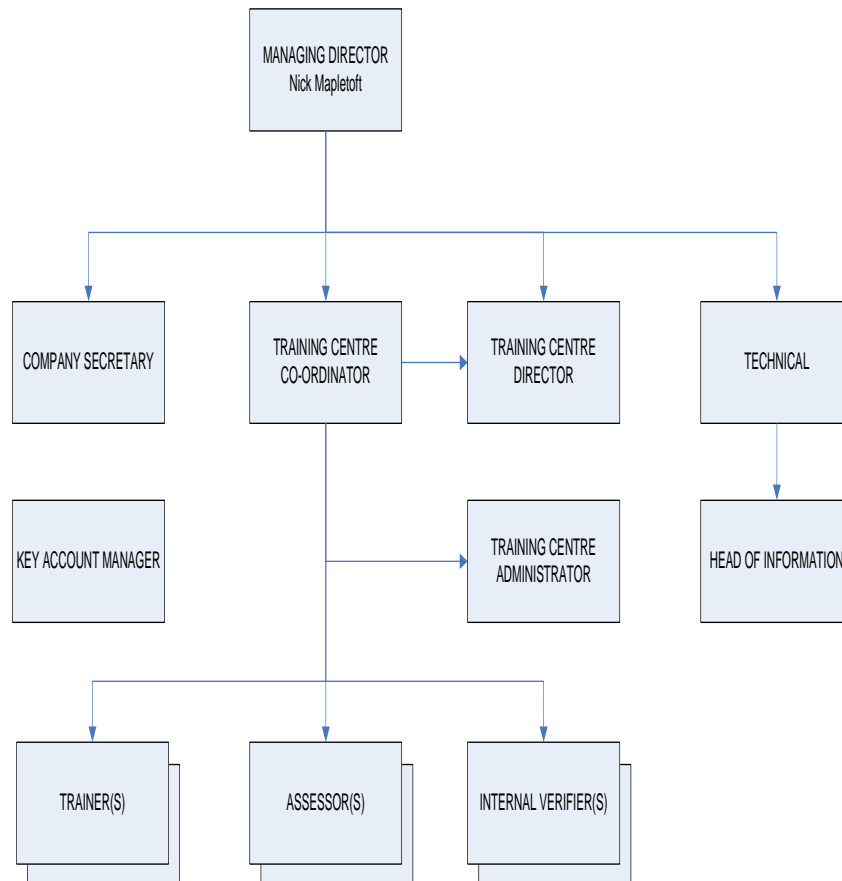
Evidence

[Figure 3.4 Nimis organization chart](#)

[Figure 3.5 Quayside School committee diagram](#)

[Figure 3.6 Quayside School of Higher Education organizational chart](#)

Nimis Limited
TRAINING CENTRE ORGANISATIONAL CHART



October 2013

Figure 3.4 Nimis organization chart

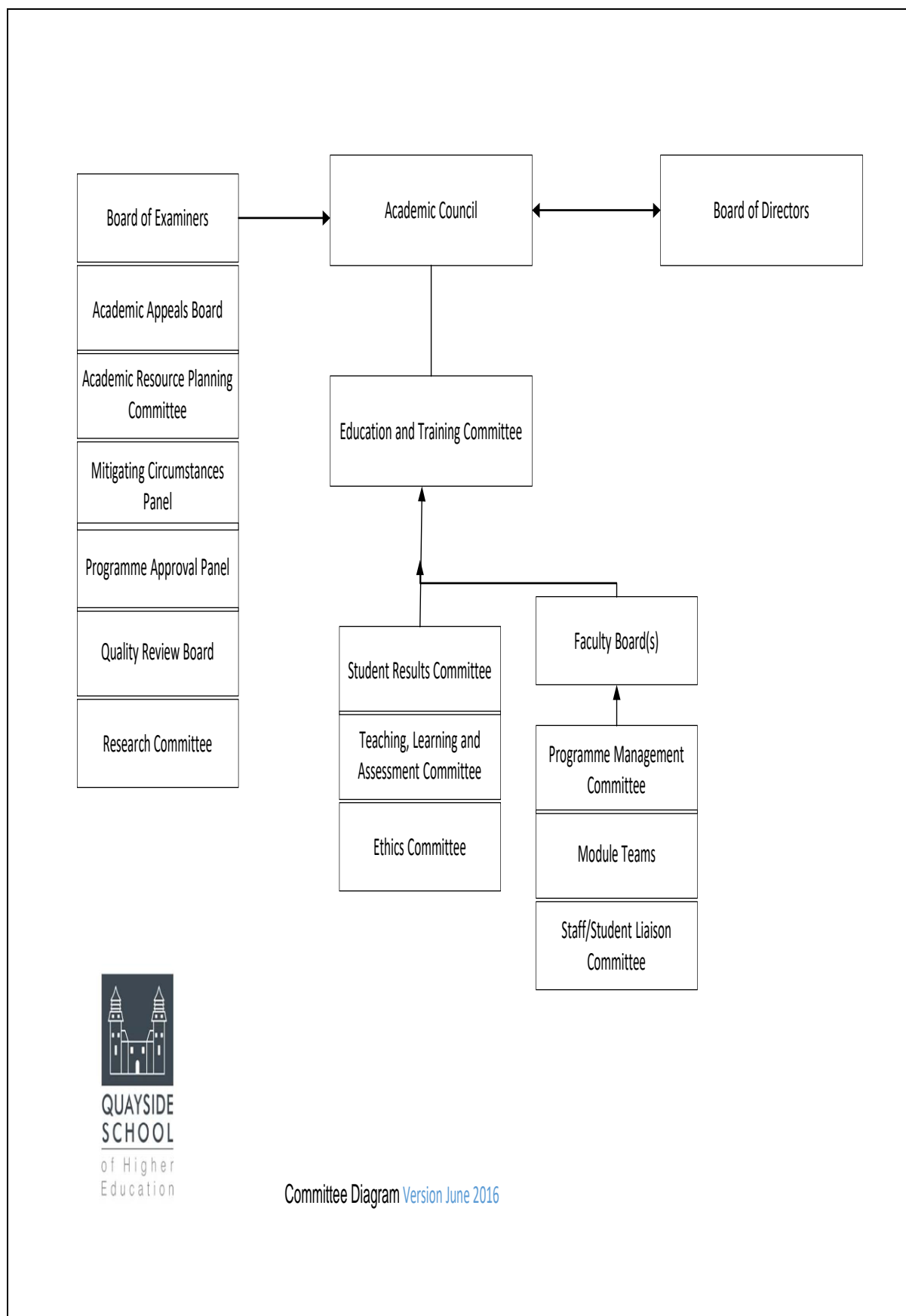


Figure 3.5 Quayside School committee diagram



Quayside School of Higher Education - Organisational Chart

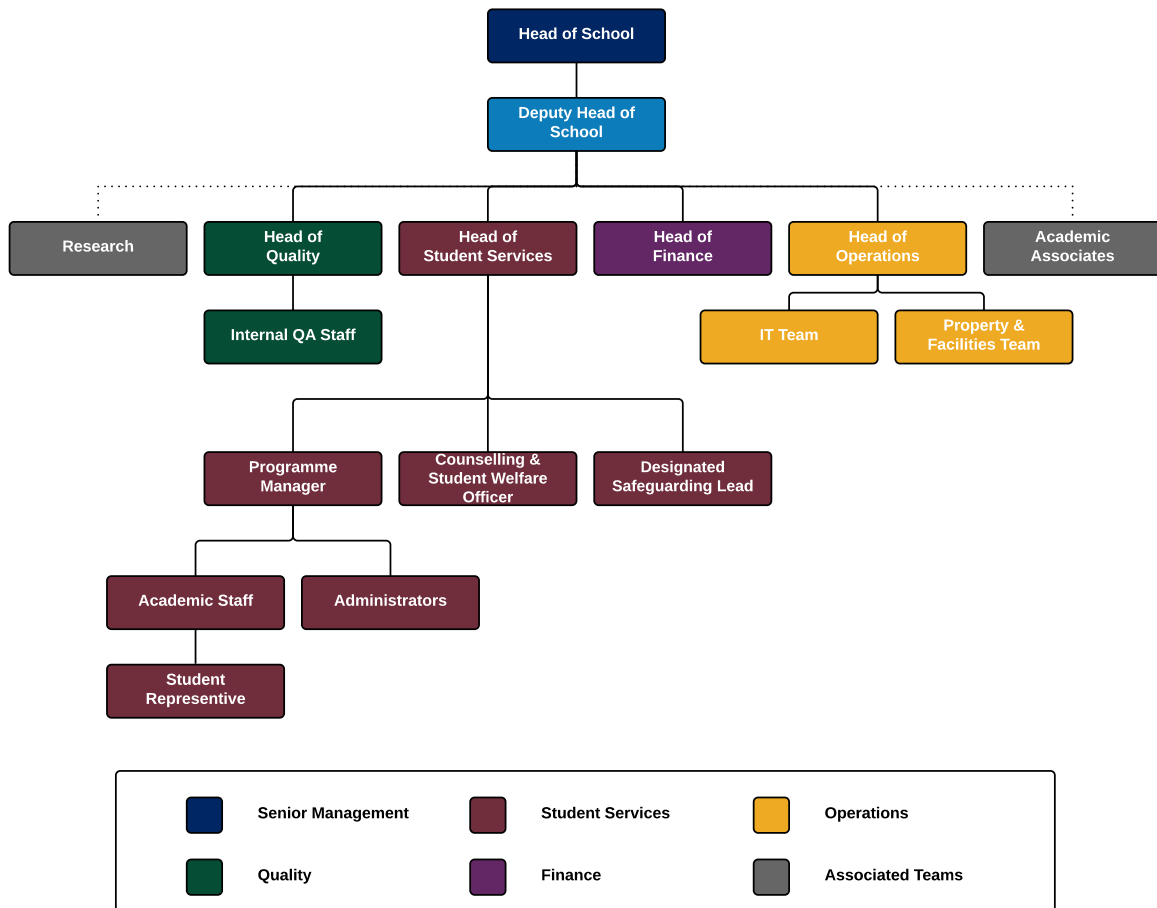


Figure 3.6 Quayside School of Higher Education organizational chart

3.4. Policies and procedures

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

There were three of us involved in drafting all the necessary policies and procedures, terms of reference, student hand book and associated materials. Just coordinating our activities on the thousands of pages of documents required, was a challenge.

██████████ had the bright idea of starting a Policy Register and the necessary document controls for change tracking and approval. We created mapped policy diagrams so that we could understand the potential implications of a change of one policy on others.

This policy writing process would become a full-time exercise and one which ██████████ would later take on as Head of Policy & Governance. I understood the importance of accuracy in the policies, we would, quite rightly, be held to account for any mistake. They would be reviewed and activity would be reviewed in light of the

policies, they would be under close scrutiny internally but also externally by the OU and others.

The creation of the Student Handbook was particularly challenging because of its size and breadth of coverage, and because this would be one of the most significant and important documents we would have. One of the biggest tensions was that we had ideas of how we wanted to do things but were governed by the OU regulations. In the end the Student Handbook was a compromise. (See Thesis 5.2)

Reflection on Contribution

QSoHE was and intended to be, a challenger to existing HE providers. Having to operate within the extensive and tightly controlled OU regulations, made this more difficult. At times I would be disappointed that we needed to compromise but then after a while we would tacitly start to follow established modes of practice, falling into line with existing institutions. It would take a time of reflection to realize that we needed to be firmer in taking a stand to deliver HE the way we had set out to. This would be more difficult in that we would need to resist the constant temptation to 'give in'.

Where QSoHE had not delivered a degree apprenticeship, nor had the OU. We realized that we could learn from and with each other and this we have done.

Evidence

[Table 3.2 QSoHE policy register](#)

[Figure 3.7 Student Handbook](#)






A		B	C	D
 QUAYSIDE SCHOOL OF HIGHER EDUCATION		QSHE Policy Register		
			>1 year	
			>3 months	
			<3 months	
			Due	
		DUE FOR REVIEW	POLICY	
		01-Jan-17	Additional UKBA guidance	
		01-Jan-17	Admissions Procedure	
		01-Jan-17	Anti Bribery Policy	
		01-Jan-17	Apprenticeships - UK Visas and Immigration Compliance	
		01-Jan-17	Conflict of Interest Policy	
		01-Jan-17	Equal Opportunities Policy	
		01-Jan-17	Public Interest Disclosure Procedure	
		01-Jan-17	Staff Admissions Procedure	
		01-Apr-17	Registration and Certification Policy	
		01-Jul-17	Board of Examiners - An overview	
		01-Jul-17	Board of Examiners Agenda Template	
		01-Jul-17	Chair's Action Template	
		01-Jul-17	Data Retention Schedule	
		01-Jul-17	General Regulations	
		01-Jul-17	Invitation to Interview	
		01-Jul-17	Letter of Acceptance	
		01-Jul-17	Student Handbook	
		01-Jul-17	Post Holders: Roles and Responsibilities	
		01-Jan-18	Academic Appeals Procedure	
		01-Jan-18	Academic Misconduct Policy	
		01-Jan-18	Board of Directors - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Data Protection Policy	
		01-Jan-18	Education and Training Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Equality and Diversity Policy	
		01-Jan-18	Ethics Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Examination Procedures for Candidates	
		01-Jan-18	Invigilation guidelines	
		01-Jan-18	Marking and Grading Guidelines	
		01-Jan-18	Overview - Setting, Marking and Moderation	
		01-Jan-18	Programme Management Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Quality Review Board - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Research Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Staff Student Liaison Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Committee - Terms of Reference	
		01-Jan-18	Teaching, Learning and Assessment Policy	
		01-Feb-18	Malpractice and Maladministration Policy	
		01-Apr-18	Whistleblowing Procedure	
		01-Jun-18	Safeguarding Policy	
		01-Jun-18	Student Complaints Procedure	
		01-Jul-18	Exenuating Circumstances Policy	
		01-Jul-18	Nimis Limited Health and Safety Policy	
		01-Aug-18	Programme Approval Panel - Terms of Reference	
		22-Aug-18	Risk Management & Business Continuity Plan	
		01-Sep-18	Academic Council - Terms of Reference	
		01-Sep-18	Academic Resource Planning Committee	
		01-Sep-18	Board of Examiners - Terms of Reference	
		01-Sep-18	Data Security	

Table 3.2 QSoHE policy register



Student Handbook

BA (Hons) Professional Management

2016/17

Figure 3.7 Student Handbook



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3.5. BA (Hons) Professional Management – programme creation

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

Having never developed a degree programme before, the prospect of doing so was rather daunting. I had experience of undertaking the CMI Level 7 extended diploma and then topping up to an MBA; mistakenly I thought we could do something similar to deliver the CMDA. Our first proposed prospectus summary was to undertake CMI qualifications at levels 4 and 5, then spending the final year on a degree programme top-up. This proposal would have had the benefit of using already drafted CMI

qualification specifications, but reluctantly we had to concede that this route was not viable for several reasons, we would need to write a full degree programme.

My colleagues and I started by researching existing business and management degrees and researching to see which modules Trailblazers were proposing to deliver. We worked closely with the CMI and set up an office next to the CMI in Holborn (London), we also worked with UVAC and some local (North East based) providers who were also preparing to deliver the CMDA. We had employer and student focus groups, and we fully researched the CMDA standard and the QAA sector subject benchmarks. We worked on a number of revisions of a mapping that mapped our proposed modules to the QAA benchmarks and the CMDA standard, this process taking several months. For inspiration on the programme design I read and re-read the WBL works of Helyer and later Fulton.

By the time of our OU validation event we had drafted a full programme with some help of an HE consultant we had met at the CMI, but the time it was taking to write all of the modules meant it was perhaps a little unpolished in places. The OU validation panel were supportive and had some suggestions for module changes, they also made it a condition that we engage an HE consultant with experience of writing degree programmes to help finalise the Level 5 and Level 6 modules. We were cognizant of developments in HE work-based learning, the need for the programme to be relevant and of benefit to the employer as well as the student, and the requests that came from the employer and student focus groups. (See Thesis 5.1 & Thesis 5.2)

Reflection on Contribution

I don't think we ever doubted our ability to write the programme, a challenge was to make sure that we didn't just write another business degree, this had to be different because it was a degree apprenticeship and we wanted to stay true to the employers and working students. The result needed to be assessed rather than taking an inspectorial approach, whilst still ensuring that learners demonstrated their own originality and study.

I learned a lot from the extensive reading I was doing, from the programme research, and from the OU and our HE consultant, from the employers and potential students in the focus groups.

We prioritized the finalization of materials for the first year so that we could start delivering our BA (Hons) Professional Management degree, to then finalise the second- and third-year modules during that first year.

Evidence

Figure 3.8 Example of mapping to the QAA subject benchmarks

Figure 3.9 Example of mapping to the CMDA standard



Appendix 1

The overall learning outcomes for the BA (Hons) Professional Management are:

1. An in depth understanding of the main areas of professional management and the way these areas interrelate.
2. Knowledge and understanding acquired through formal learning and applied to the business environment.
3. An ability to apply an independent approach to develop the skills required by a professional manager.
4. Skills acquired and demonstrated through continuous professional development in the workplace.
5. The ability to apply critical tools and techniques that enable the integration of theory and practice within a work environment.

The table below demonstrates the learning outcomes within this programme meets the subject benchmark statement set by the UK Quality code for Business and Management.

UK Quality code Benchmark statement for Business & Management	BA (Hons) Professional Management learning outcome mapping
5.4 Threshold Standard	
Knowledge and understanding of the key areas of business and management, the relationships between these and their application.	1
Demonstrated competence within the range of subject-specific and generic skills and attributes.	2, 4
A view of business and management which is predominantly influenced by guided learning with a limited critical perspective.	5
5.5 Benchmark Standard	
Have a wide knowledge and understanding of the broad range of areas of business and management and the detailed relationships between these and their application to practice.	1
Consistently demonstrate a command of subject-specific skills as well as proficiency in generic skills and attributes.	2, 4
Have a view of business and management which is influenced by a wide range of learning sources, based on a proactive and independent approach to learning.	3, 4
Be distinguished from the threshold category by their enhanced capacity to develop and apply their own perspectives to their studies, to deal with uncertainty and complexity, to explore alternative solutions, to demonstrate critical evaluation and to integrate theory and practice in a wide range of situations.	3, 5

Figure 3.8 Example of mapping to the QAA subject benchmarks

CMI DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP – MAPPING TO DEGREE ASSESSMENT PLAN

+		
Unit	Learning Outcome	CMI Degree Apprenticeship Assessment Plan
Leading People	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Assess different leadership styles that can be adopted in different situations 2. Evaluate an organisation's approach to diversity management 3. Integrate working practices and organisation's values to support a high performance work culture 4. Recommend coaching and mentoring techniques that can be used to improve individual's performance 	Leading People 7.1.1, 7.1.2 7.2.2 7.2.1, 7.3.1, 7.4.1, 7.4.2 7.1.3, 7.5.1
Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate methods and channels of communication that can be applied within different organizational settings 2. Analyse interpersonal and communication skills across a range of organizational contexts 3. Demonstrate the ability to manage and Chair meetings, presenting clearly actions and outcomes 4. Apply influencing and persuasion skills to organizational interactions across a range of activities 	Communication 6.1.1, 6.2.2 6.3.1, 6.2.1 6.2.2, 6.4.1, 6.5.1, 6.6.1 6.7.1
Sales	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluate theories to inform sales strategy within a chosen organisation 2. Assess methods for monitoring the implementation of a sales strategy 3. Analyse approaches to innovation in product and design within a chosen organisation 4. Apply creative approaches to develop a range of solutions to meet customer and organization needs. 	Sales and Marketing 4.1.1, 4.1.2, 4.1.3 4.3.1, 4.3.2, 4.5.1

Figure 3.9 Example of mapping to the CMDA standard

3.6. HE strategic plan

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

I recognized the need to have a Strategic Plan, in part this was because it was a requirement of the OU Institutional Approval, but also because, following such major changes at Nimis, we needed to communicate our plan with staff, associates and other stake holders.

The plan was developed with some, but limited, involvement of stakeholders and FE tutors. I held one event where I described the main aspects of the plan with the FE staff before finalising the strategy. (See Thesis 5.2 & Thesis 5.3)

Reflection on Contribution

The plan and KPIs were professionally produced and included stock photographs. If looking the part counted for anything, then they counted for something because they certainly looked good. They were impressive in appearance but unfortunately not in substance.

Whilst having **a** strategy was a great idea, having this particular strategy turned out to be counterproductive. The Strategy only covered HE provision which was a significant mistake that led to ostracisation between the FE staff who felt, it later became apparent, that we had no interest in FE provision and that we did not value their work. This resulted in a bitterness of feeling and sometime later I became aware that many of the FE tutors even wanted the HE provision to fail. I was forced to point out that the FE and HE could not be separated, that the relationship between them had become symbiotically and mutually dependent.

I did not recruit sufficient staff to deliver the plan's KPIs and the existing staff were still balancing a number of roles. I was too busy juggling the HE and FE provision with such a small delivery team that I did not take a step back to review our longer-term strategy and our progress towards achieving our objectives.

Evidence

[Figure 3.10 2015-2020 QSoHE strategic plan](#)

[Figure 3.11 KPIs and targets](#)



Figure 3.10 2015-2020 QSoHE strategic plan

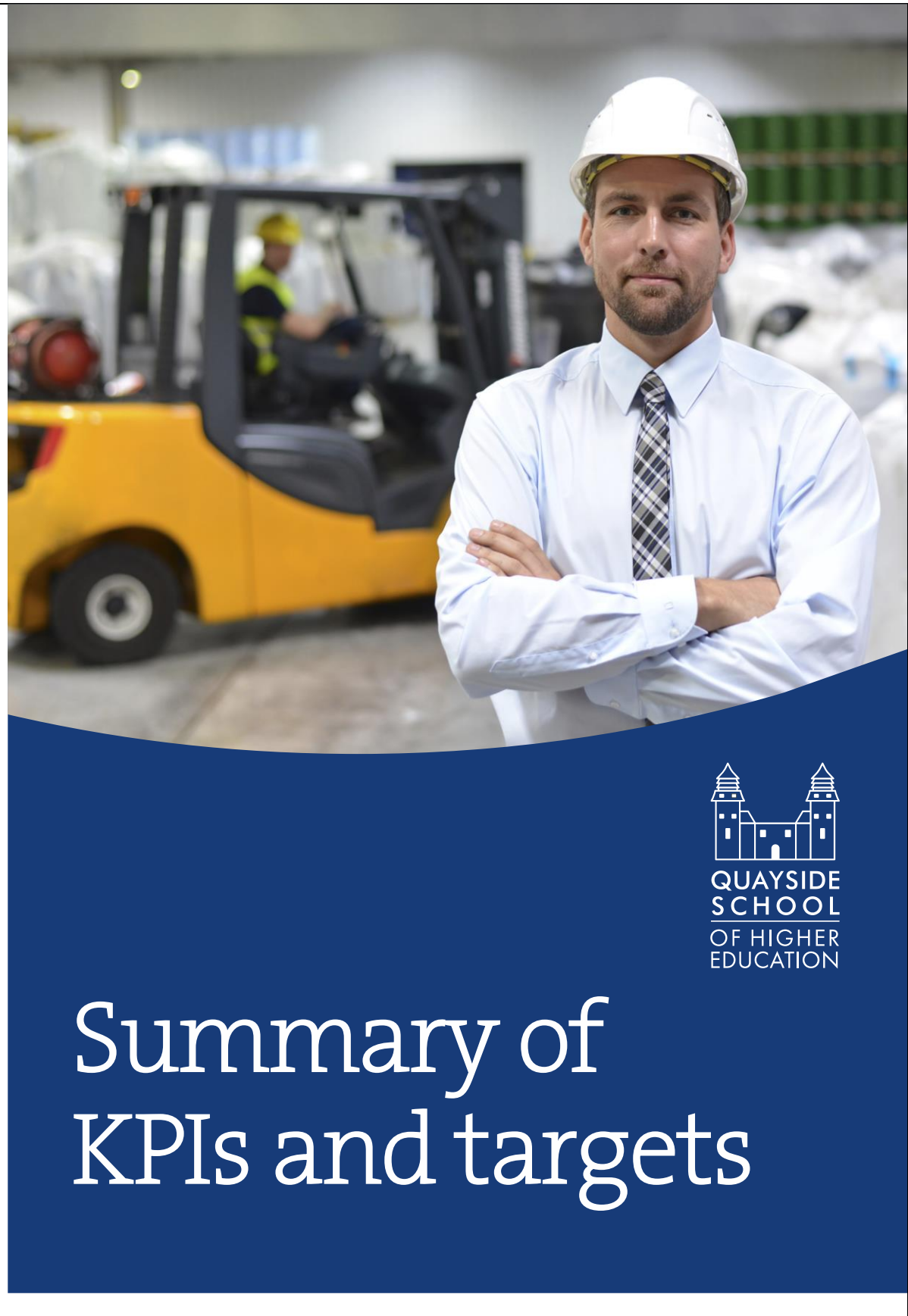


Figure 3.11 KPIs and targets

3.7. Website and brochures

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
Skills & Abilities	
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

As our new identity started to gain traction, we designed a new website dedicated to the HE provision and supplemented this with new hardcopy and ecopy brochures, with stock images. We monitored what other trailblazer deliverers were doing and it was interesting to see how rapidly they were changing their materials, websites and prospectuses.

The website was at www.quayside.school (which seemed to be the best option as we were not able to use a .ac.uk) and was initially one long page that, on first draft, was really just a copy of the prospectus summary. The next draft was a re-designed longer page with some decent stock images. This page was designed in conjunction with a web author and the resultant site needed to be manually edited by [REDACTED], which meant that it was better to leave it as a static page.

By now we were working closely with a freelance designer and he submitted a proposal for a redesigned website with a content management system. We agreed to the commission and shortly afterwards had a full website with content management system that [REDACTED] could update.

These constant changes were indicative of the speed of development and change that was a part of being a Trailblazer deliverer. (See Thesis 5.1)

Reflection on Contribution

It felt good to be at the forefront of developments, it felt like we were being taken seriously now and that we really could make this work.

I really enjoyed starting something completely new and from scratch with a small team who believed we could do it and were prepared to put in the necessary effort. It was pleasing to see what was really a neo-subjective reality, start to actually come to life. It was frustrating that I just did not feel I had enough time to juggle all of the tasks as well as I should.

Our web presence resulted in one client, with six students, which was underwhelming but also a sign of success that we were starting to be seen as a contender for the CMDA. In conversation we found that we had a real challenge in going up against established universities and there were times when I was concerned that we might never have many students. I also started worrying that we just didn't have the staffing that we would need to really try to take this (the CMDA) to market. The website and brochures had made the idea become real, we would need to deliver on our promise.

Evidence

[Figure 3.12 Quayside School of Higher Education website](#)

[Figure 3.13 QSoHE programme overview](#)

[Figure 3.14 QSoHE brochure](#)

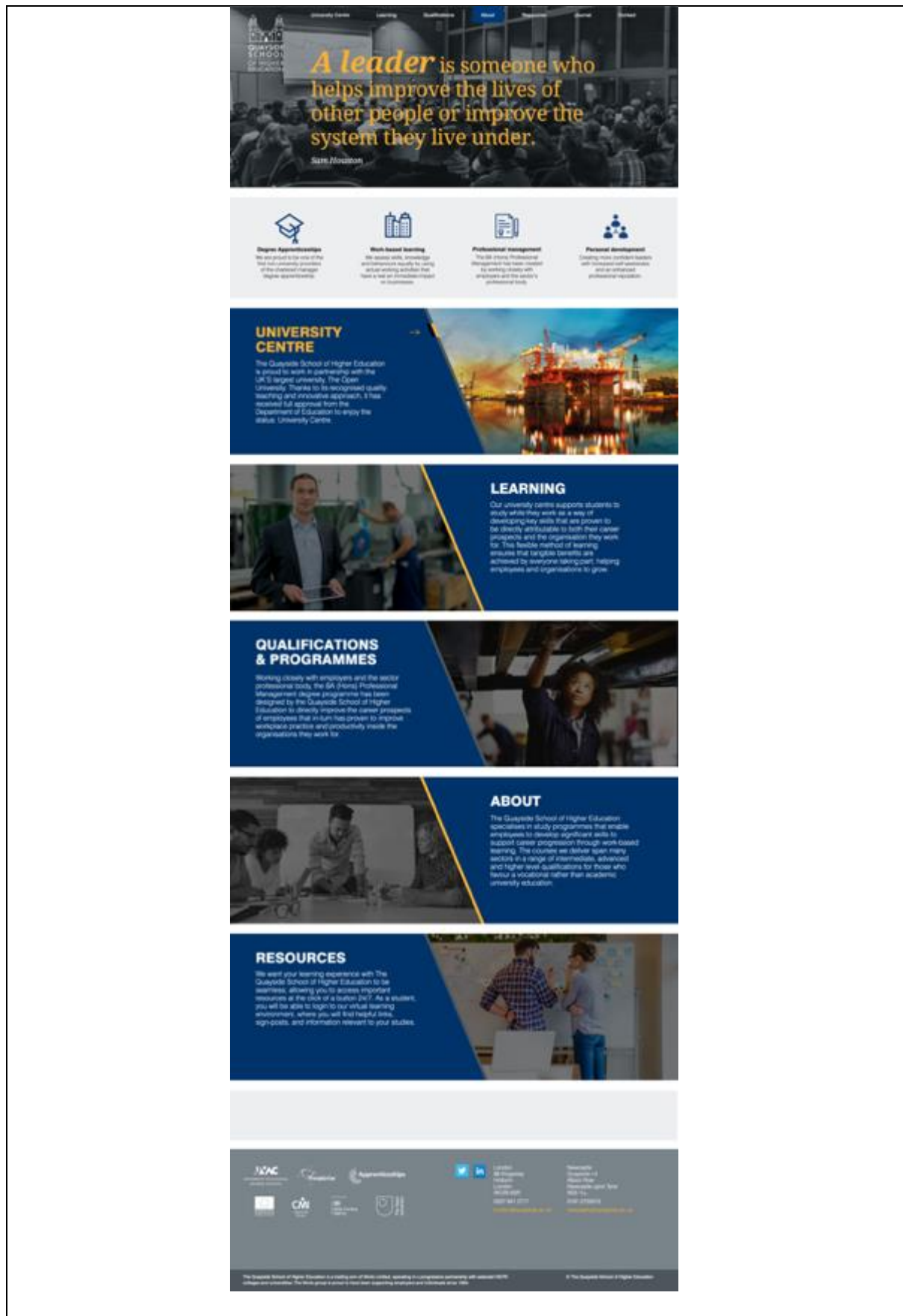


Figure 3.12 Quayside School of Higher Education website

Programme Overview

Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship



A leader is one who
knows the way, goes
the way, and shows
the way. John C. Maxwell

Figure 3.13 QSoHE programme overview

Excellence in Leadership and Management



Figure 3.14 QSoHE brochure

4. Section Four (2017-2019)

Introduction

Section four details my experience of running the degree apprenticeship programme, setting up UCQ Commercial Operations, national rollout, restructuring, (re)establishing of our Strategic Plan, Core Values and KPIs. This evidence also includes examples of interaction with internal and external communities of practice, staff and student focus groups, engagement with regional sector and employer groups, sharing of research through the OUVF (Open University Vocational Partners) conference. Included are details of the UCQ review process.

Portfolio evidence	Learning outcomes						
	K1	K2	K3	K4	S1	S2	S3
Section Four							
Set up of UCQ Commercial Operations							
Strategic plan (2018-2023)							
Core Values							
Vice Principal, KPIs and restructure							
Sharing experience - OUVF							
Staff focus groups and events							
Reviews							

Table 4.1: Section Four - Representational mapping of portfolio elements against the doctoral Learning Outcomes

4.1. Set up of UCQ Commercial Operations

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

A member of UCQ's Academic Council was the Managing Director of [REDACTED], part of the global [REDACTED]. One of UCQ's clients, with staff on our CMDA programme, he was very excited about the work we were doing. He left [REDACTED] following a restructure and we started discussing working together on a national roll-out at UCQ.

Discussions about how this relationship should be structured, operated and remunerated, took over a year involving solicitors. We decided to set up a separate company, UCQ Commercial Operations Limited (UCQCO), which would be licenced

by UCQ to market its CMDA programme. There were several reasons for establishing a new company: literature on small business growth suggests that new companies are much more likely to achieve high growth; the new company could be dedicated to one activity stream and not be distracted by either legacy or non-value adding activities; it appeared to provide the right structure for growth and remuneration without jeopardizing the financial independence of UCQ.

Together we mapped the sales process and then this was expanded and incorporated into the UCQ Sales Operating Model and into a new sales management system. Once all of the promotional materials and supporting brochures and guides had been produced, UCQCO was ready to take on sales associates.

Initially the suggestion was that we could set up UCQCO with little or no investment, but I was of the opinion that, if we were going to do this, we needed to do it properly and that meant it had to be funded by UCQ. It cost a little over £200,000 in the first 12 months to get UCQCO established. (See Thesis 5.2)

Reflection on Contribution

I wanted to work with [REDACTED], but I was cognizant that I would be entering a 10-year commitment, that there would be no question of changing my mind. UCQ was financially sound, with no future commitments and although I had no intention of doing anything else other than work for UCQ, it was reassuring to know that it was an option; it gave me the perception of freedom. Setting up UCQCO and entering into a long-term relationship, made me very nervous.

██████████ is persistent and assertive, qualities that help him in selling but I felt that he was pushing me too much. I need time to reflect, where he wants to keep pushing forward. There were many times where I felt uncomfortable with the pace of change and the commitments I was making. I was also very much aware of ██████████ commitment and offered to pay him a salary in that first year, so that he could dedicate himself to UCQCO, whilst still surviving until the first sale was concluded.

The first few months working with ██████████ meant a lot of my time was spent getting him to understand the steps of our sales process, the key attributes and benefits of our CMDA programme, and higher education work-based learning and degree apprenticeships more generally. Although I knew that it was necessary for ██████████ to understand all of these aspects, after a couple of months of feeling as if I was constantly answering his questions or drafting copy for more or revised publications, I had had enough and I just stopped answering his emails. Setting up UCQCO was taking too much of my time and I was under pressure to keep UCQ operating so that we could fund the UCQCO escalating costs.

Experience has taught me to try to agree to the demands of the sales team so that they have all the resources they need and less of an excuse if they are not functioning as targeted. This was difficult with ██████████ as it seemed as if he took every opportunity to spend UCQ's money, making me feel uncomfortable and even out of control. Subject reading showed me that there will almost always be tension between the sales (and marketing) department and corporate due to their demands for funds. It was not just the UCQCO costs that were escalating, I knew that UCQ needed new staff for a national roll out and this meant I needed to be looking for appropriate people

and budgeting for that too. I felt as if I was constantly juggling UCQ and UCQCO demands on my time.

Evidence

Sales Process

Figure 4.1 UCQ Sales Operating Model

Figure 4.2 UCQ sales process map

Website

Figure 4.3 New website for UCQ

New brochures

Figure 4.4 Example of UCQ in the press 1

Figure 4.5 Example of UCQ in the press 2

Press articles:

Figure 4.6 Example of new UCQ brochures 1

Figure 4.7 Example of new UCQ brochures 2

Figure 4.8 Example of new UCQ brochures 3

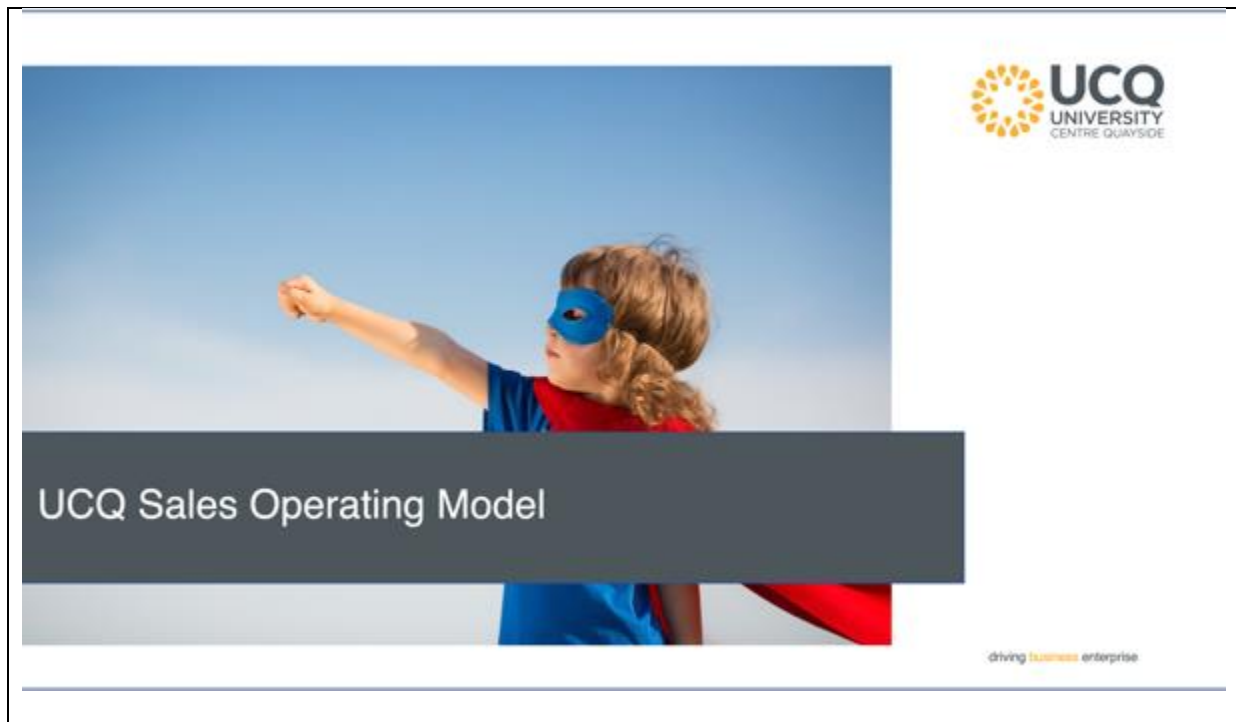


Figure 4.1 UCQ Sales Operating Model

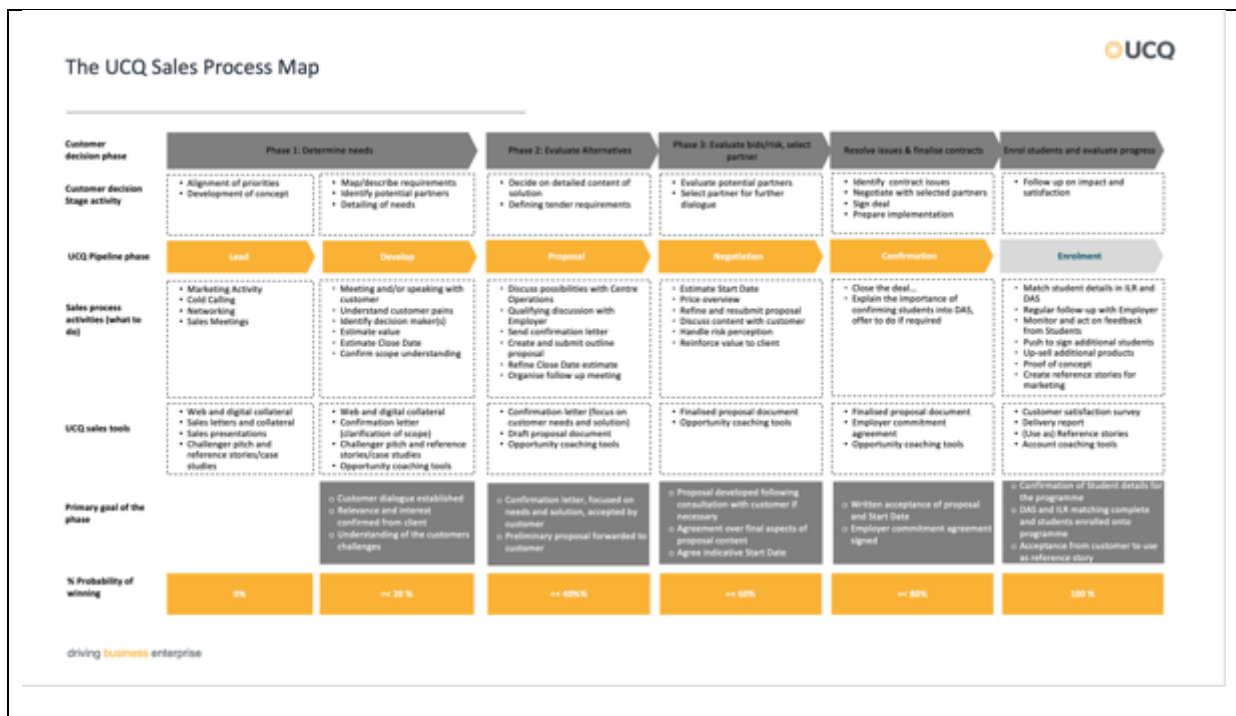


Figure 4.2 UCQ sales process map



Figure 4.3 New website for UCQ

Home / North West / Education / [Liverpool and Manchester to host new degree apprenticeships](#)

Liverpool and Manchester to host new degree apprenticeships



Nick Mapletoft

Education | April 17 2018 | Neil Hodgson

Independent provider of higher education, UCQ, has chosen Liverpool and Manchester as two of six regional centres to host its newly launched Chartered Manager Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA).

UCQ (University Centre Quayside) is one of the first in a new breed of independent higher education institutes being encouraged by government through the Higher Education and Research Act 2017.

In addition to stimulating competition in the sector, the Act is aimed at driving innovation, raising quality standards and aligning higher education more closely with employer needs.

Nick Mapletoft, principal and chief executive of UCQ, said: "We're very excited to bring our CMDA to Liverpool and Manchester.

"It provides a direct link between higher education and the corporate world and the potential it brings to businesses in, and around both regions is significant."

With a programme duration of up to three years, the UCQ CMDA combines academic rigour and real world business know-how, and can be tailored to an employer's specific requirements.

ADVERTISING

<https://www.thebusinessdesk.com/northwest/news/2019470-2019470>

1/3

Figure 4.4 Example of UCQ in the press 1



! (<http://www.facebook.com/TrainingJournal>) " (<http://www.twitter.com/TrainingJournal>) # (<http://www.linkedin.com/company/training>)

For apprenticeships to work the ESFA and IfA must put the employer first

Written by **Jon Kennard** on 24 October 2018 in **Press Zone**

Nick Mapletoft believes the Education & Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) and the Institute for Apprenticeships have to take responsibility for the drop in apprenticeships.



The fiasco caused by the ESFA, when it launched the non-levy tender contracts last year, is the start of a catalogue of errors by the government body.

Having abandoned the first round of procurement entirely, after everyone had tendered, it then prioritised the contracting of the re-tendered non-levy on the amount of funding potential providers requested, rather than on track record of provision.

This resulted in many new providers being unable to meet the targets they put in their tender, because they neither had the demand nor the experience. No wonder the ESFA had to rethink the awarding process, especially after it gave a contract to a provider that had gone bust a couple of months prior, while colleges with 'good' and 'outstanding' rankings missed out.

Ironically, further impact has been caused through the interference of the Institute for Apprenticeships (IfA) in what is meant to be an employer led initiative.

Despite the Chartered Management Degree Apprenticeship (CMDA) being one of the few new standards employers want, the IfA has proposed a drop in the funding rate from £27,000 to £22,000. This has resulted in more than 150 employers appealing against the proposed change, with not a single employer supporting it.

The problems caused by this uncertainty mean that providers cannot effectively plan their provision. Furthermore, providers operate in a market that works to an average profit margin of 4%, yet the ESFA withholds 20% of funding until the apprentice successfully achieves a degree, which could be more than four years from the start of the course.

At a time when only 20% of British managers have a formal qualification in management, which is a major factor in us falling behind other G7 nations in terms of productivity, you would think that the two bodies tasked with getting the best out of apprenticeships would be going all out to help employers. Instead all they seem to do is erect obstacles.

About the author

Nick is the Principal & CEO of University Centre Quayside (<http://ucq.ac.uk/>) (UCQ) which is a private University Centre which delivers Education & Skills Funding Agency-funded adult education and training, and levy-funded provision.

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(<https://support.google.com/youtube/answer/171780hl=en-GB>) or Vimeo (<https://vimeo.com/help/faq/sharing/videos/embedding-videos#how-do-i-embed-a-video-or>)

Figure 4.5 Example of UCQ in the press 2



WE ARE UCQ

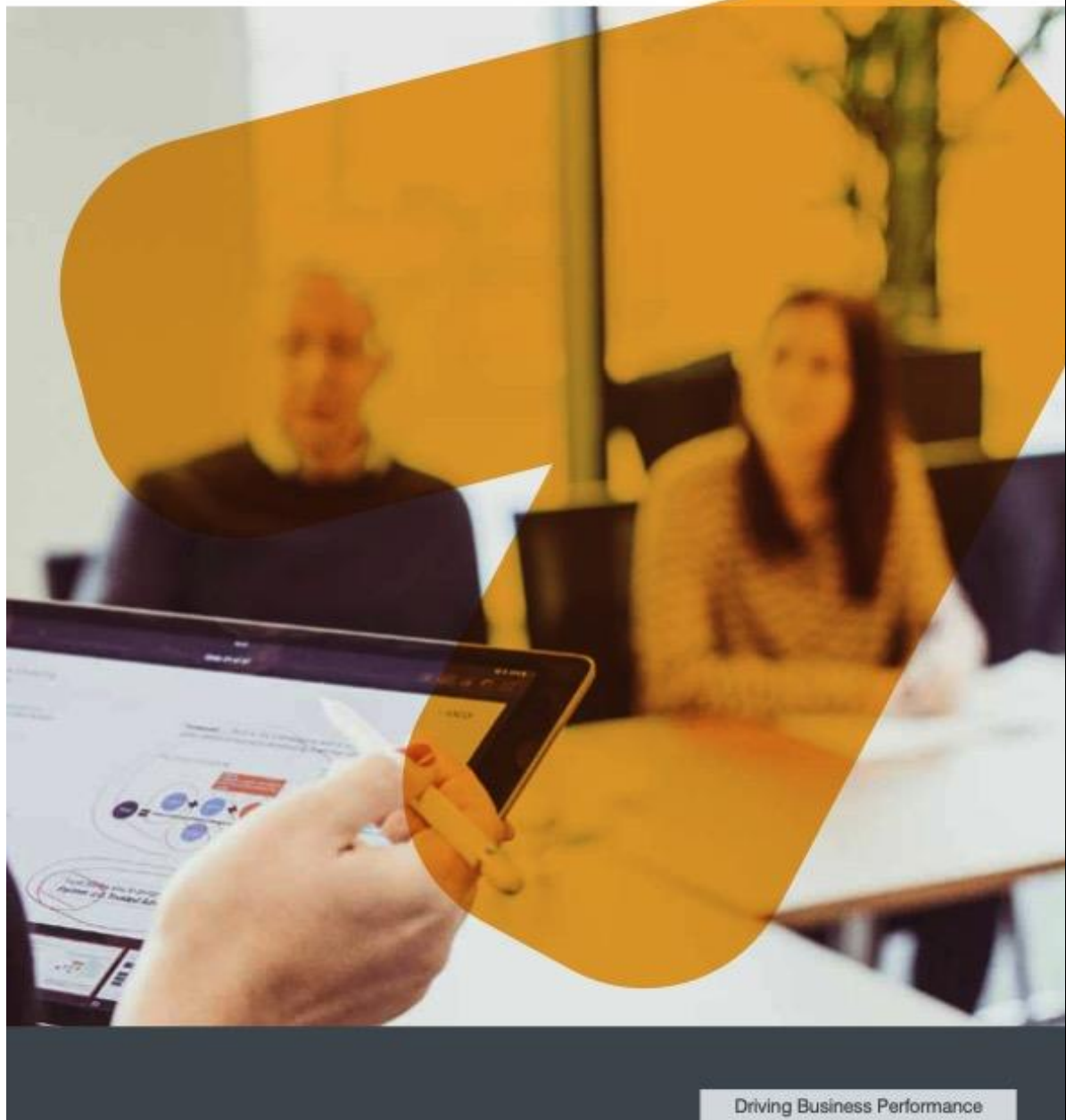


Figure 4.6 Example of new UCQ brochures 1

THE EMPLOYEE'S GUIDE TO THE UCQ CHARTERED MANAGER DEGREE APPRENTICESHIP

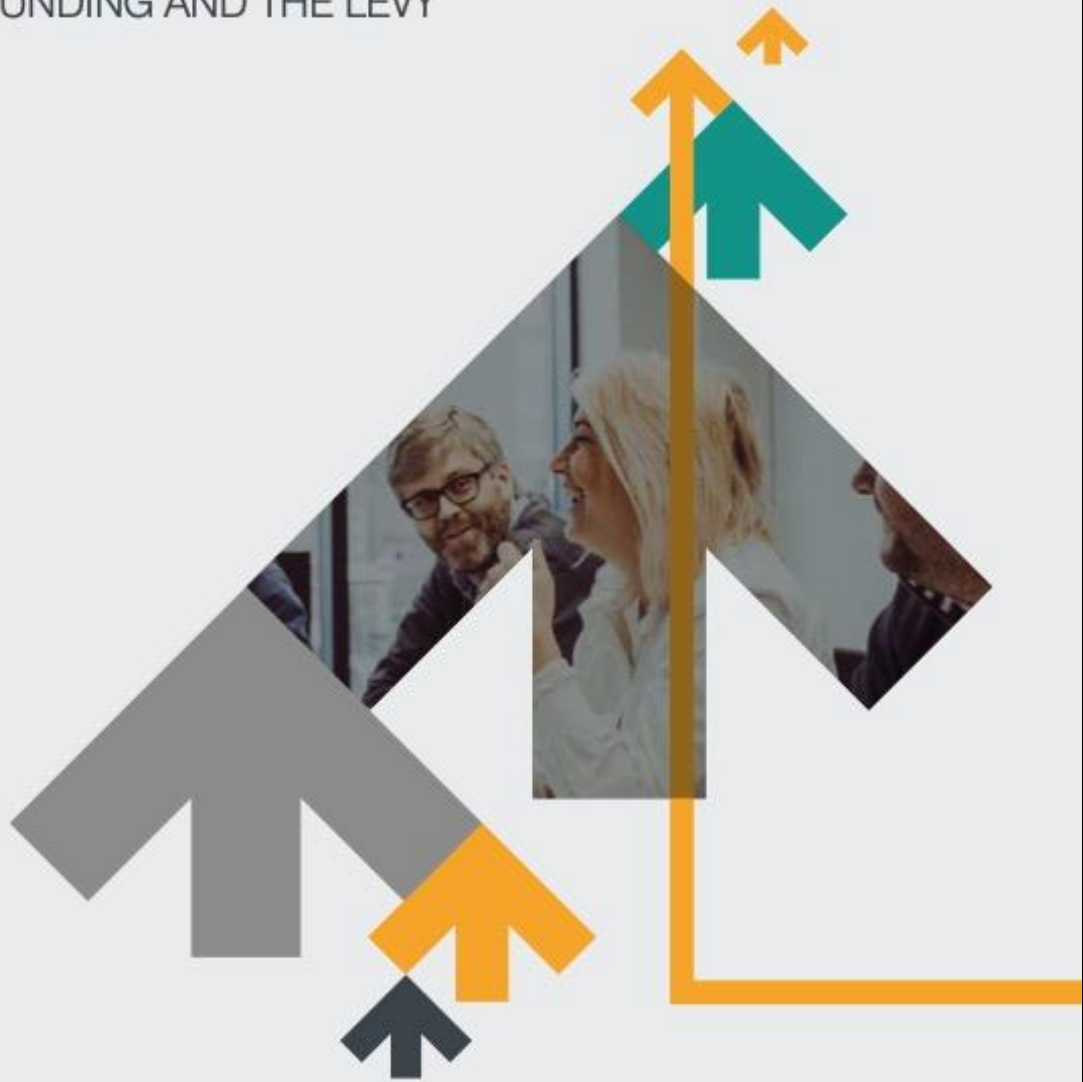


Driving Business Performance

Figure 4.7 Example of new UCQ brochures 2



GUIDE TO APPRENTICESHIP FUNDING AND THE LEVY



Driving Business Performance

Figure 4.8 Example of new UCQ brochures 3

4.2. Strategic plan (2018-2023)

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

In 2017, following success in achieving institutional approval and degree programme validation from The Open University, we applied to the Secretary of State to become a University Centre. We were successful in this request and became the University Centre Quayside (UCQ).

In 2018 we continued to grow and change, and it was becoming apparent that having and following a Strategic Plan was crucial, but the 2015-2020 plan was no longer right

for us and it only covered the HE side. First, I set about working on a new strategic plan and I invited [REDACTED] from UCQ and [REDACTED] from UCQ Commercial Operations to review my first draft. [REDACTED] proposed several changes, but it was clear that what he was proposing was not a representation of UCQ at all, it was KPIs relating to UCQ Commercial Operations' sales activity. I decided to put the plan on hold until I had sufficient time to finalise with colleagues from UCQ, it was more important that the plan be something that UCQ could follow for the next five years. I had learned a valuable lesson following the failure of the previous plan and the resulting animosity from the FE tutors. This time I made sure that staff were involved through focus group sessions and constant dialogue, which inevitably delayed the completion.

In the event, the new Strategic Plan would not be finalized until Christmas 2018 and I organized a staff event in Newcastle, video recording and live webinar for our remote staff, in January 2019, when the newly printed Strategic Plan was shared. (See Thesis 5.2 & Thesis 5.3)

Reflection on Contribution

It was great when we received the approval to be known as a university centre, but I had some reservations about renaming the company. Most of our provision was on pre-employment courses and I was concerned that being a university centre might prevent potential learners on the vocational and employability skills courses, from coming to us. I also had an attachment to the company name Nimis, it was after all one that I had been using since 1993 and its identity came from **Nick Mapletoft** Information Systems; I had a long and also an emotional attachment to the name.

People knew us as Nimis, which from a familiarity and awareness angle, had advantages as well as possible disadvantages if people still saw Nimis as an IT provider. There would also be a substantial rebranding exercise if we were to change name. Initially we started to use the University Centre Quayside (UCQ) logo and name but still traded as Nimis.

It soon became apparent that this was confusing to organisations and individuals that did not know us, so I made the decision to officially change our name from Nimis Limited to University Centre Quayside Limited and to trade also under the name UCQ. This exercise started with a list of whom we would need to inform and what we would need to do but in reality, it was a much larger undertaking than I ever imagined. Some clients were concerned that they would need to re-contract with us. The Open University pointed out that we had validation as Quayside School of Higher Education, a brand name of Nimis, there was talk that we may need reapproval. I worked on reassuring clients and validating bodies that we were the same company, we had the same staff, the same procedures and the same programmes and quality assurance in place, the only thing that we had changed was our name. I never regretted changing to UCQ, but it was certainly a lot more complicated than I had understood it would be.

Reflecting now it is clear that being UCQ and being a university centre gives us advantages. It is consistent and whilst it is better for our HE students, it also turned out to be positive for our FE students too, they like the idea that they are 'going to the University'.

Once the new Strategic Plan was finalized it went to our designer to brand it up. I was keen to share this with staff immediately, but the timing was off in that Christmas was

approaching, it was better to postpone until the January. The official launch event went really well, with the (new) FE staff and the HE staff all being really positive and welcoming of the plan.

The KPIs have been developed separately because they may change during the five years, but the overall plan is unlikely to.

Evidence

[Figure 4.9 2018-2023 UCQ Strategic Plan](#)

[Figure 4.10 Strategic Plan launch event](#)



[Figure 4.9 2018-2023 UCQ Strategic Plan](#)



Strategic Plan 2018-2023

Friday 11 January 2019

Nick Mapletoft, Principal and Chief Executive

Figure 4.10 Strategic Plan launch event

4.3. Core Values

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
Skills & Abilities	
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

The reflective practice modules of the professional doctorate helped me to understand that dissonance between UCQ's values and those of some of our staff, were the cause of the biggest problems that we had. Where we had a Strategic Plan that documented **what** we wanted to achieve, the Core Values would document **how** we should behave in our pursuit of our ambitions.

██████████ explained how important the formal documenting and sharing of core values had been at Maersk and that appraisals could incorporate a review of each person's adherence with UCQ's core values. ██████████ helped capture our core values, which were then finalized via a senior leadership team focus group session. Working with our graphic designer, ██████████ helped design a brochure to present our Core Values, going through a couple of revisions before settling on the brochure below which is representative of DNA. (See Thesis 5.2)

Reflection on Contribution

I held a staff event to share our core values but chose not to invite the existing tutors. Some of our tutors were behaving in ways that were against our core values and I was certain that they would simply mock our efforts and try to undermine what we were doing. I go through our core values with all new staff members on the first day of their induction, explaining how important they are and that they can expect us to behave the way we set out, and that we expect the same from them. Despite best efforts to recruit staff where we think that their espoused values are congruent with the values in practice at UCQ, this is not always the case. It soon becomes apparent and we try to rectify it, having our core values formally documented enables us to do this.

Evidence

[Figure 4.11 UCQ Core Values](#)

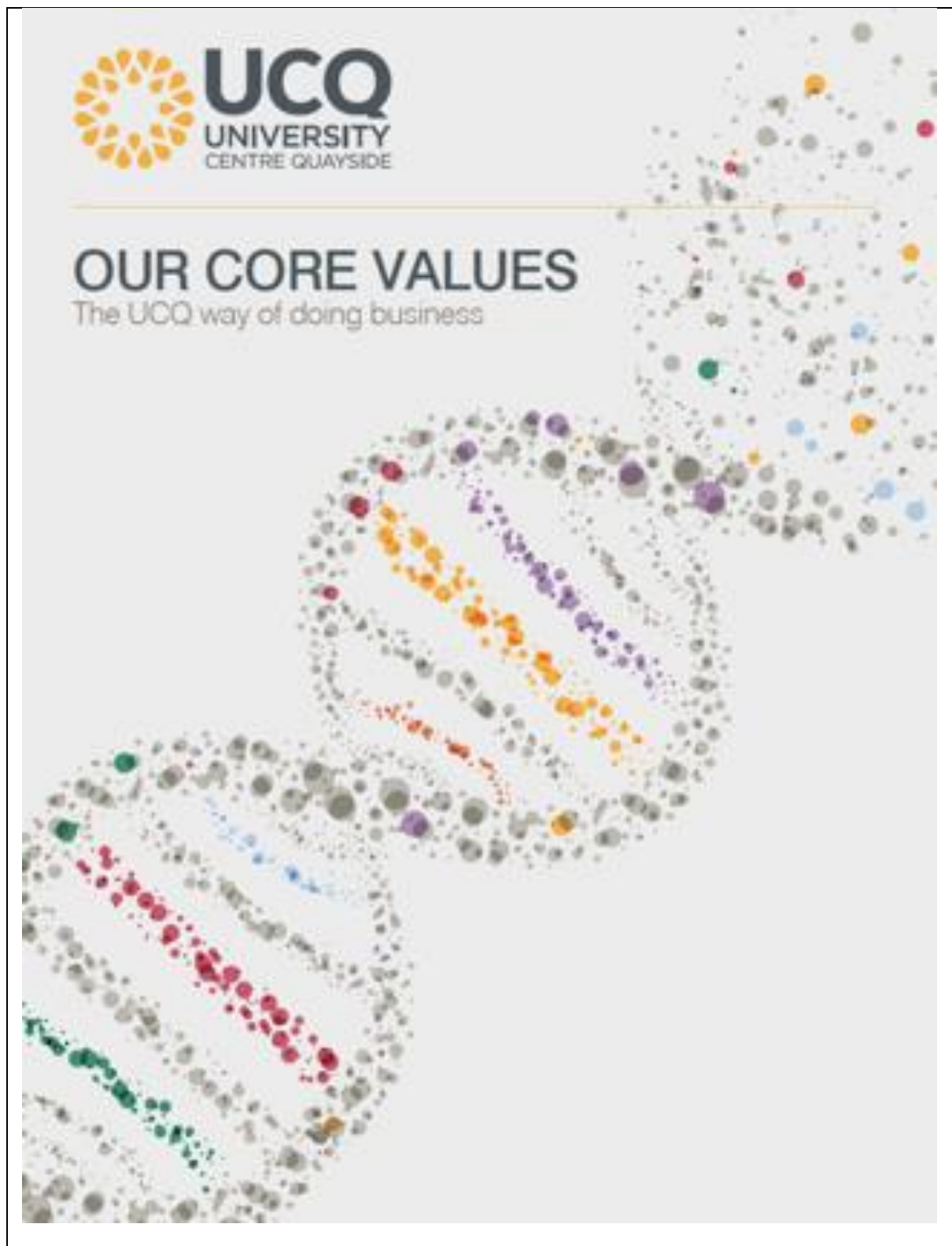


Figure 4.11 UCQ Core Values

4.4. Vice Principal, KPIs and restructure

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

In 2017 we had recruited a new HE tutor, which was a wrong move because there was no one to manage him and the existing tutor did not like the support, despite needing it. Soon after an explosive meeting the new tutor left and I needed to decide on the structure moving forward.

It was apparent that we needed additional staffing and a restructure of existing staffing, and an experienced curriculum expert and people manager to manage them, so I set about recruiting a Vice Principal (VP). This was immediately followed by restructuring which would continue for nearly a year. There was also a restructuring of our

Committees and a rewriting of our Strategic Plan but not the key performance indicators (KPIs), which took about nine months longer. (See Thesis 5.2)

Reflection on Contribution

For the VP roll I approached a director and former head of department for and with whom we had been working for eight years. I had asked her to join us several times before, but the timing was not right. I approached her again, asked her to come and see what we were doing and to see if it was enough to tempt her across. I delivered the best equivalent I could muster of the Steve Jobs to John Sculley question “Do you want to sell sugar water for the rest of your life, or do you want to come with me and change the world?”. I can’t remember quite what it was, but it worked. I was delighted when, following negotiations, she said she would join us.

She immediately set about a complete restructure and the pace and extent of change unsettled everyone. It was of course necessary, but it also took an emotional toll as we parted company with tutors who had been with us in some cases for ten years.

Any change of senior leadership has an impact on existing staff and structure, this was no exception. In order to help define roles and building on each of our strengths, we held a Senior Leadership Team away day at Jesmond Dene immediately after the Christmas holiday. Being away from the office made quite a difference, I felt inspired and more creative in different surroundings.

Evidence

Figure 4.12 Senior Leadership Team away day to finalise the restructure and KPIs

Figure 4.13 New UCQ organisation chart

Figure 4.14 New committee structure (post review)



Figure 4.12 Senior Leadership Team away day to finalise the restructure and KPIs

UCQ organisational structure - 2017/18

The organisational structure at University Centre Quayside exists to ensure that all functions associated with the ability to provide high quality education programmes are fulfilled.

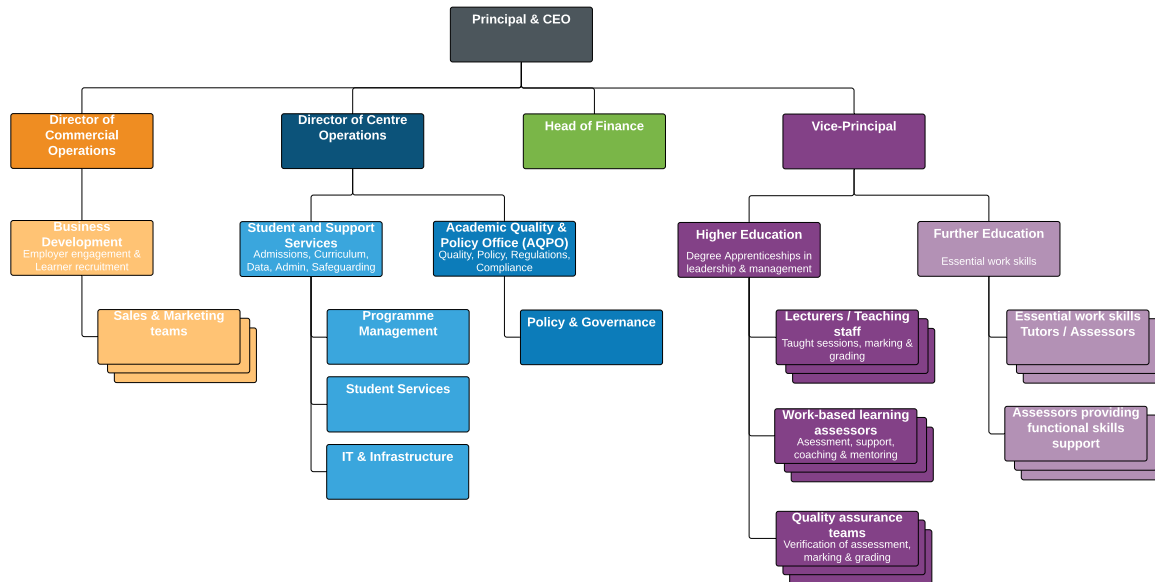


Figure 4.13 New UCQ organisation chart

UCQ Committee structure - 2017/18

The committee structure at University Centre Quayside has been designed as an enabler to achieving the aims of the UCQ strategic plan. UCQ have organised its committees in a way that will allow the key functions (teaching & learning, quality assurance, management and administration) to operate in the most effective way, with a culture of continuous improvement and enhancement of the student experience.

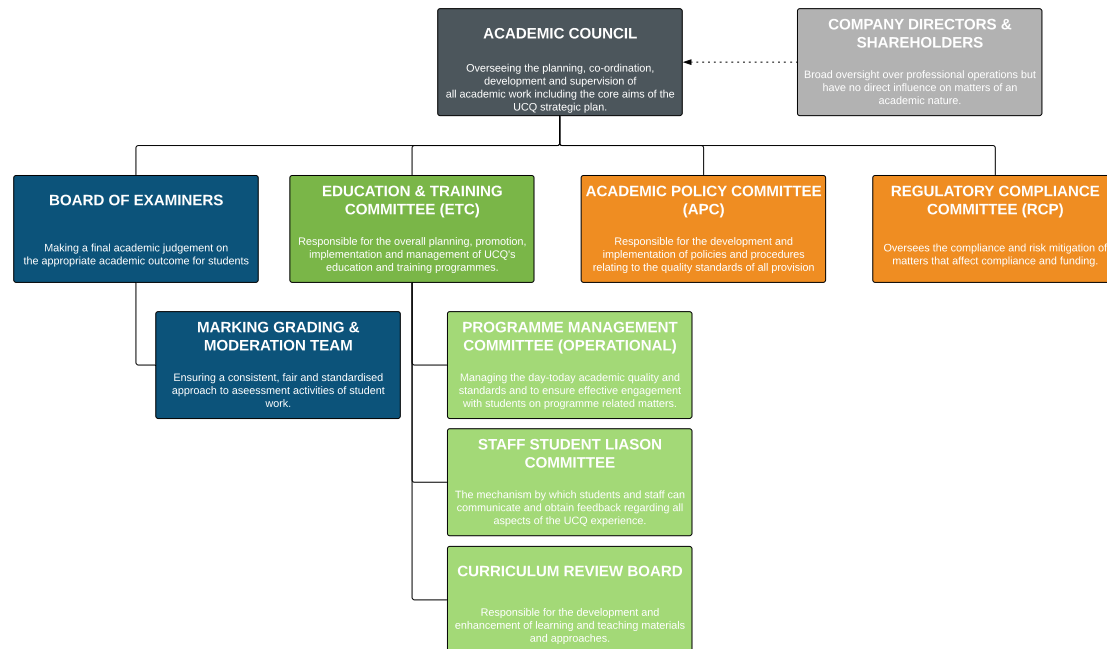


Figure 4.14 New committee structure (post review)

4.5. Sharing experience (OUVP) and developing my research

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

As a validated partner of The Open University, QSoHE was invited to the biennial Open University Validated Partners (OUVP) two-day conference in Milton Keynes. The agenda showed core sessions and also optional breakout sessions. One of these breakouts was to be on degree apprenticeships, so I decided to attend with two of my colleagues.

We submitted our intention to attend and chose the sessions we most wanted to attend and were surprised to hear back from the OU by return, to say that they wanted us not to attend the degree apprenticeship session, but to deliver it.

My research project was starting to take shape following the OUVF conference and the Contextualization & Planning module at Sunderland. (See Thesis 1.4 & Thesis 6.4)

Reflection on Contribution

I felt honoured to be asked to deliver a session and I set about designing the content with a colleague. He would speak about degree apprenticeships and then I would share my research findings to date, sharing details of employer and learner perceptions of degree apprenticeships from my earlier research.

I had been to Milton Keynes as a child, but it was unfamiliar to me when I got off the train. I was surprised at the number of homeless people who appeared to be living just outside the station. It was a short ride to the OU campus and I was impressed at the mixture of old and new buildings. The taxi driver dropped us off at Walton Hall (manor house), which I would later discover is a 17th Century manor house, with a front section that was added in 1830; it was certainly an impressive building.

The conference was very informative and inspiring. I was very nervous of speaking on day two, but having met all the delegates, I hoped to calm my nerves before speaking. There was a choice of two simultaneous sessions and a part of me hoped that at least half the delegates would choose the other session. As it turned out, 90% of the delegates came to our session, which was terrifying but also flattering.

When it came to my turn to speak, my nerves got the better of me and I was cross with myself for shaking and having trouble speaking. I persevered and by the time of a Q&A, I had finally remembered how to breathe.

Determined that my public speaking should improve, I took away several lessons and over time developed ideas of how I might improve such as being better prepared with handouts (partly to take some of the attention off me), more slides, practice standing and talking (I usually prefer to sit).

At lunch several attendees came to speak with me, they seemed very interested in degree apprenticeships despite many not having considered delivering on them prior to our session. Attendee feedback was very encouraging and they were kind enough not to comment on my nerves.

After a good deal of thought on how to best visualize my research, I decided on a Tube map approach, which is based upon an electrical connections diagram. I was really happy with the result and it helped to focus on the many tensions that were already becoming evident when considering delivery of a degree apprenticeship. The visualization also better enabled me to understand the main stakeholders and to share my research with others, especially those with a more visual VARK style.

Evidence

[Figure 4.15 OUVP confirmation of attendance and facilitating session](#)

[Figure 4.16 OUVP post conference email](#)

[Figure 4.17 Research visualisation](#)



Figure 4.15 OUVP confirmation of attendance and facilitating session

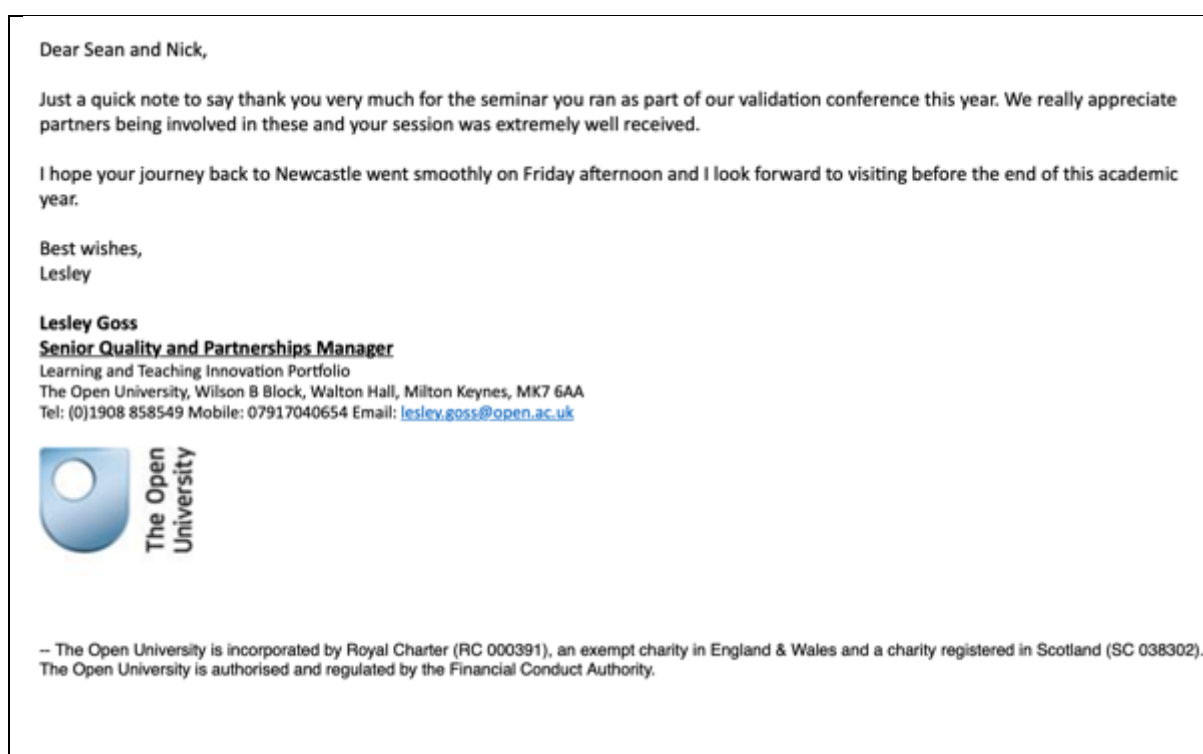


Figure 4.16 OUVP post conference email

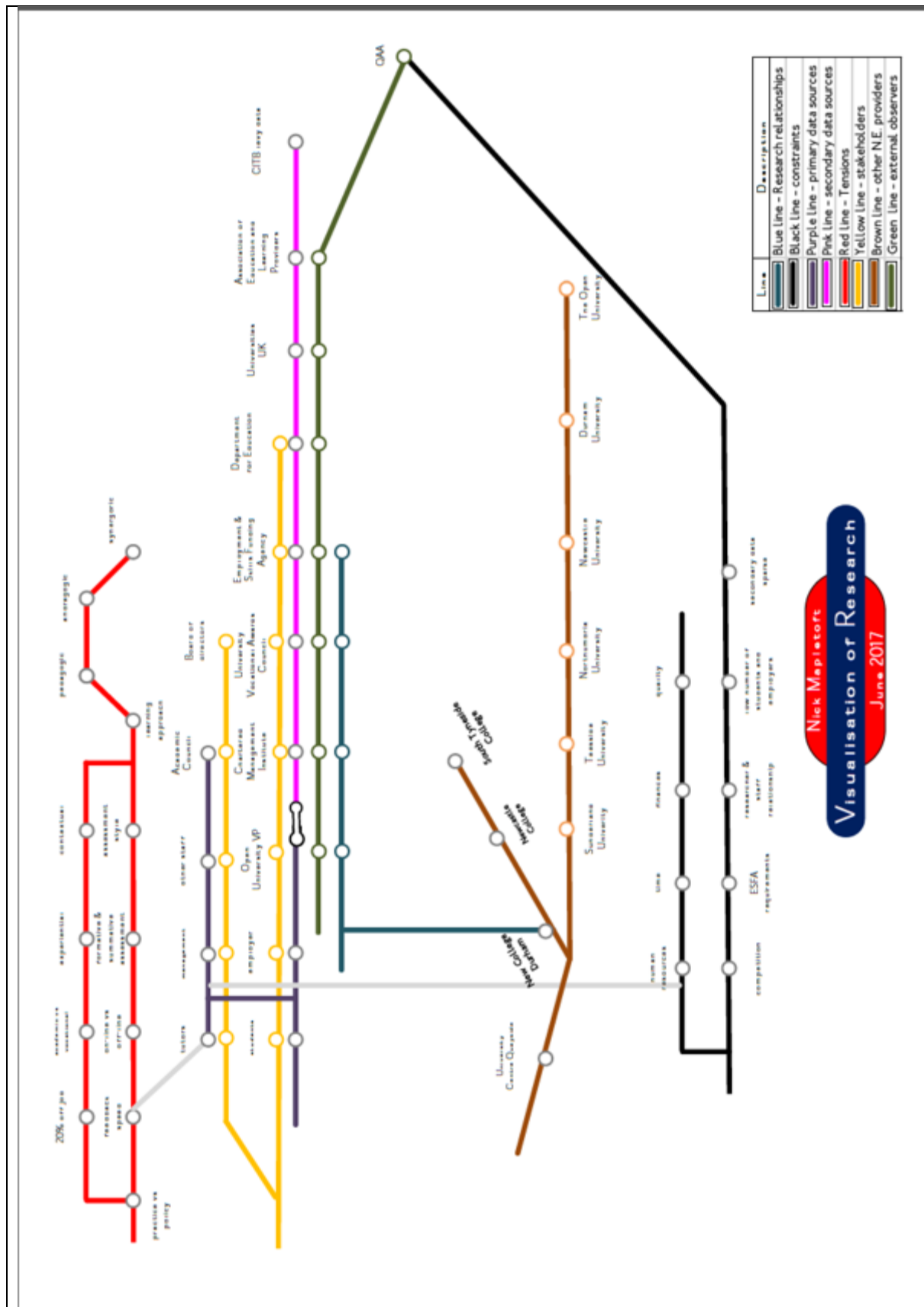


Figure 4.17 Research visualisation

4.6. Staff focus groups and UCQ events, Sunderland University FBLT research conference

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.

Contribution

We understood the need to engage with our internal and external communities of practice, whilst having a limited budget and finite amount of time. Careful consideration was given to the selection process for the external groups taking account of the cost benefit and likely effectiveness coupled with accessibility.

The SLT identified potential groups and RAG rated them before agreeing which ones to engage with. Those coloured green and identified as the priorities included the North East Learning Providers and their newly established Higher Education Specialist Group, the University Vocation Awards Council (UVAC) which consists of many of the UK's leading WBL universities, Chartered Management Institute because they were leading the development of the management trailblazer standards and were proactive in lobbying, and the Open University Validated Partners because we had validation through the OU and would be seeking degree awarding powers as some of the other OUVF members were or had (such as Leeds Arts University).

These external forums helped us to appreciate that we were not alone and that we experienced similar pains and that we could to some extent support each other in alleviating those pains.

Internal groups were established less formally and were supported by extensive remodeling of our office facilities and committee and staffing infrastructures to support community of practice engagement and sharing. A bridging group (internal – external) involved meeting with a larger range of WBL tutors from a cross section of universities and other HE providers, including industry experts that had not yet delivered HE, to share knowledge, ideas and anecdotes. (See Thesis 5.2)

Sunderland University's FBLT research conference, "Catalysing Impact: Creativity, Commercialisation and Connectivity", provided a platform for updating the research community on key findings affecting both practice and knowledge. There was a cross section of attendees from the academic community and some doctoral students.

Reflection on Contribution

It was challenging working with the external communities of practice and focus groups. UVAC could not let us join (as Nimis or QSoHE) because we did not have degree awarding powers, however they would later vote to change their constitution to allow organisations without degree awarding powers to join as associate members, which we did. With UVAC and the OUVF I felt as if we were outsiders, imposters even. The annual fee for an Associate Member was set at £600 in year 1 but rose to £800 in year 2 and then £2,000 in year 3, at which point we chose to suspend our membership until we had more students. When we reviewed our involvement with UVAC and use of

their services, we simply weren't engaging with them very much as an organization, although over time we were engaging with individual universities and sharing intelligence and experience with them directly.

We remain members of the North East Learning Providers, however the HE WBL specialist group is no longer active.

Our internal focus groups were a success although some staff did not actively participate at first. It was good to involve all the staff and the result was a more democratic and inclusive progress, and as the HE team was growing, we were getting better at sharing knowledge.

The Sunderland FBLT conference was another opportunity for me to practice speaking publicly. I was excited to share my results and I concerned that I might become hyper excited and not be able to speak fluently, but after a slightly nervous start I felt that I gained in confidence. In the interval afterwards, several people came to say that they enjoyed my delivery and were interested in the work I have been doing, which has given me a real boost towards finishing my thesis write up.

Evidence

[Figure 4.18 Example of the staff focus group sessions](#)

[Figure 4.20](#)

[Figure 4.20 Sunderland University FBLT research conference](#)



Figure 4.18 Example of the staff focus group sessions

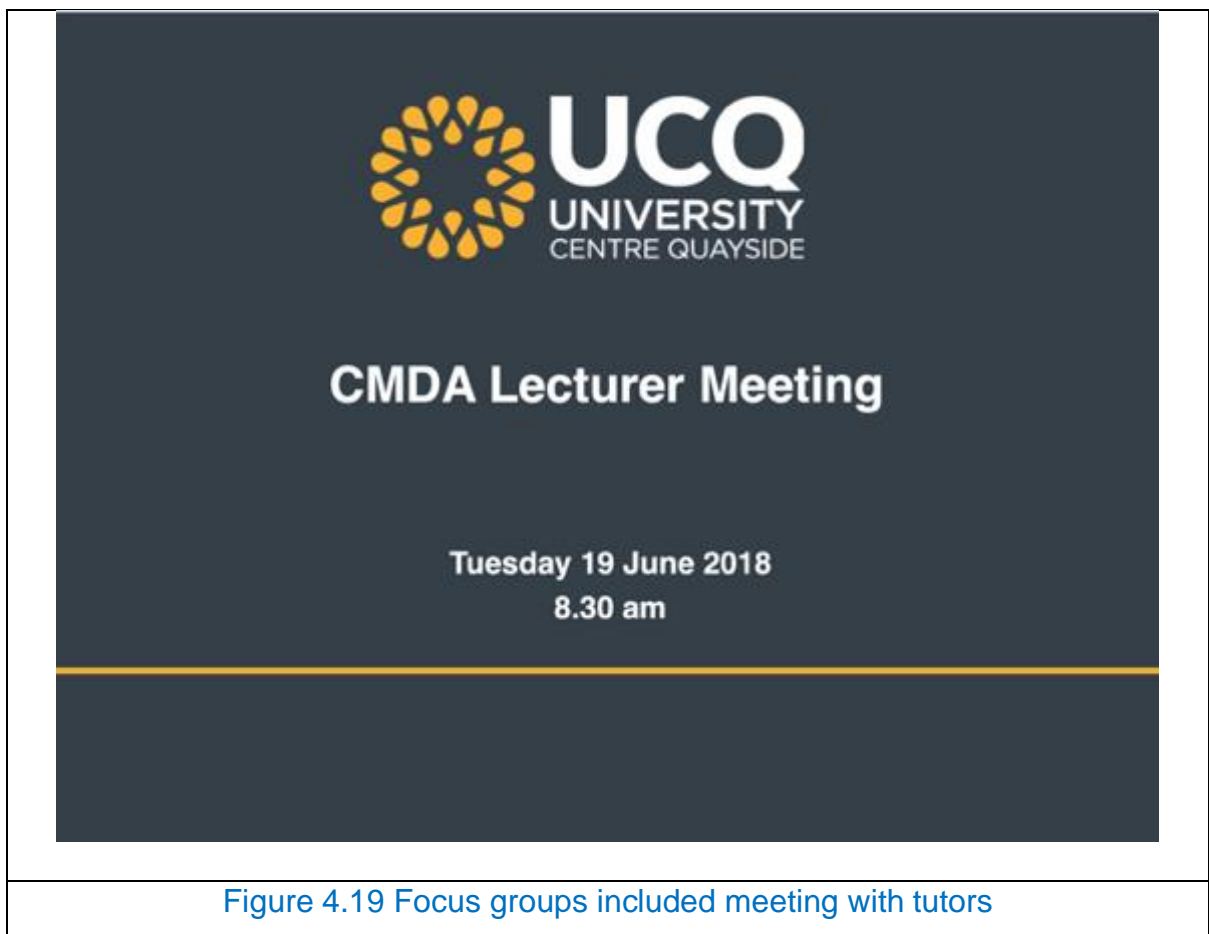


Figure 4.19 Focus groups included meeting with tutors

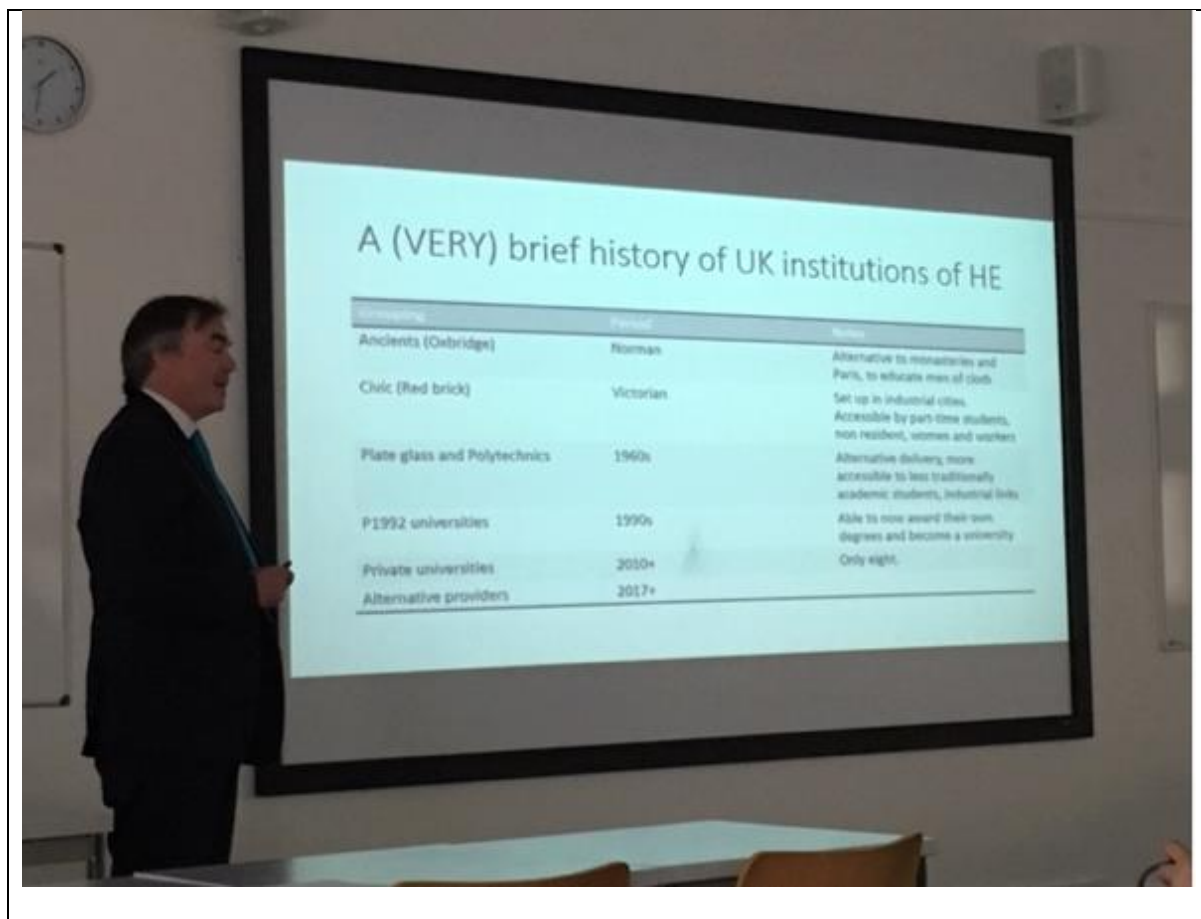


Figure 4.20 Sunderland University FBLT research conference

4.7. Reviews

Learning Outcomes Achieved	
Knowledge	
K1	The creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the profession, and merit publication.
K2	A systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an area of professional practice.
K3	The general ability to conceptualise, design, and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of professional practice, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems.
K4	A detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.
Skills & Abilities	
S1	Make informed judgements on complex issues in specialist fields, often in the absence of complete data, and be able to communicate their ideas and conclusions clearly and effectively to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
S2	Continue to undertake applied research and development at an advanced level, contributing substantially to the development of new techniques, ideas, or approaches.
S3	The exercise of personal responsibility and largely autonomous initiative in complex and unpredictable situations in a professional environment.

Contribution

One of the main issues raised by the OU Approval Panel was that QSoHE was not sufficiently self-critical and that this is something we needed to improve. Over the two years since the validation and institutional approval events, this is certainly something we have improved on. We review and refine every aspect of what we do. We have extensive and constant monitoring which feeds into our annual monitoring, covering every aspect of our FE and HE work. We monitor our activity weekly and have weekly 1:2:1 meetings with staff, we then report into monthly meetings and committees.

UCQ's FE delivery is monitored by Ofsted, for whom we produce a Self Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QUIP). (See Thesis 5.2 & Thesis 5.3)

Reflection on Contribution

Although it was anticipated that UCQ would need to improve on reviewing and refining on each aspect of our delivery, quality and management, the reality was that it took a great deal more effort than I had expected. Being directly in scope for Ofsted has taken a toll on delivery staff which has led to what feels like a constant change of staffing either through dismissal or notice. The HE staffing has been much more constant and I wonder if that is because the HE team are excited about what we are attempting to achieve, but the FE staff perhaps not so much. A key hurdle is in recruiting FE staff who have more resilience and tenacity, coupled with trying to recruit for short notice delivery with the courses being booked in already.

Evidence

[Figure 4.21 Annual monitoring review](#)

Annual Monitoring at UCQ

Institutional monitoring and programme monitoring is an essential process to ensure that students' learning opportunities enable the intended learning outcomes of programmes to be achieved. UCQ reviews both its programmes and wider institutional factors that impact upon the student experience.

The process facilitates the monitoring of UCQ's Strategic Plan and associated KPIs by prompting commentary on student satisfaction, student retention, student achievement and the overall student experience. It also invites discussion of the associated enablers which can bring about improvement, including curriculum development, assessment and feedback, learning opportunity design and delivery, student support, student engagement and enhancement.

The flow chart below shows the process of annual monitoring at UCQ.

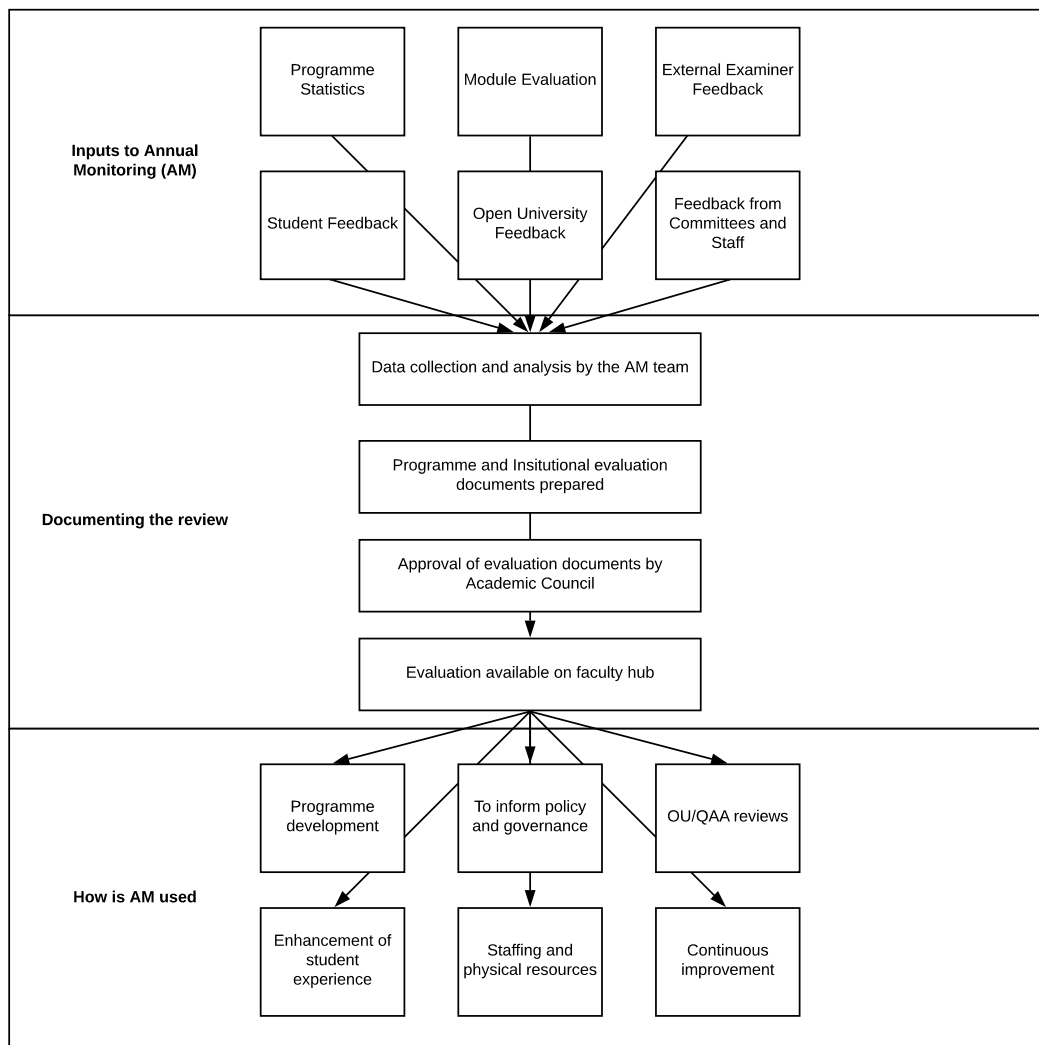


Figure 4.21 Annual monitoring review

Final reflection

The process of reflection has for me been illuminating and to some extent cathartic. It has allowed me to be indulgent and enabled me to develop my reflective practice and social and emotional intelligence.

To work on my doctorate, I needed to be in the zone. That meant spending time away from my family and from work. Such indulgence has made me feel guilty. My wife Olga and our teenage girls Charlotte and Amelia need and deserve my attention; I hope they don't feel that I have neglected them too much or for no reason. Setting up UCQ and UCQCO and delivering the CMDA and FE courses, with constant restructuring, has been very challenging, putting me under tremendous pressure whilst undertaking this research. I hope that my study is of benefit to UCQ and that the time I have spent on this outweighs the time I have been focusing on my research. There were times when I would wake up in the middle of the night and the anxiety would engulf me; I hope that will now pass.

Working on my professional doctorate has also had physiological manifestations: I gained five stone in weight (as can be seen in some of the photographs!), I now need to wear reading glasses, I can often be seen scratching my head as I developed some sort of head eczema which I just can't get shot of.

Getting into this field of research has not been without challenge. Nimis (now UCQ) was and still is, an outsider. There were times when I was reviewing the literature in which the arguments against private providers, the market, students as consumers

and work-based learning were so overwhelming, I questioned what I was doing and grew despondent, seriously considering what we were doing, what I was doing.

When viewing all four portfolio sections in overview I can appreciate the acceleration of activity in recent years and reflect on this, seeing that there is scope to be proud.